



Alumni Newsletter

December 2020



For more school news and to read The Owl Magazine, The Academy Newsletter, the Old Boys' Association Newsletter and past copies of the Alumni Newsletter, please visit the school website at belfastroyalacademy.com



[belfastroyalacademy](https://www.facebook.com/belfastroyalacademy)



[belfastroyalac](https://twitter.com/belfastroyalac)



[belfastroyalacademy](https://www.youtube.com/belfastroyalacademy)

ALUMNI NEWS

As this term draws to a close, we are grateful that although the collective experience of pupils, staff and parents since August has been very different to that of previous years, the school has retained a sense of community and a spirit of togetherness.

Pupils, staff and visitors may all be wearing masks for the majority of the day, following a one-way system, using hand sanitiser multiple times, keeping our distance from others and avoiding assemblies and large scale meetings but we are continuing with our learning, teaching, assessment, careers guidance and pastoral care in a spirit of compassion, belonging and togetherness. I would like to commend the pupils and parents who have shown such solidarity in adhering to the various precautions that have been put in place, demonstrating resilience and good humour in going about their day-day business and supporting each other.

One of the most encouraging aspects of Belfast Royal Academy is seeing the way pupils and staff share and extend their school community spirit into the wider world. A number of charity initiatives have been supported throughout this term to benefit others within our local community and those who are further afield. Sixth Form pupils have completed a sign language course to enable them to communicate with those with hearing difficulties, a significant amount of money has been raised towards Macmillan Cancer through staff participating in Movember and for Save the Children fund through the pupil non-uniform day. Sixth Form pupils are providing much needed mentoring support to disadvantaged young people, many of whom are Syrian refugees, through online lessons organised by the Conway Education Centre. Our Toy Appeal was an outstanding success with over 1000 toys donated for local charities in order to help ease the burden for those families who are experiencing real financial pressure this year. Pupils are learning that in our fast-paced world, pausing to demonstrate kindness and compassion to others takes courage and strength but will benefit the giver as much as the receiver.

There is much uncertainty about what lies ahead for the remainder of the 2020 – 21 academic year. We are not sure if we will be able to continue to operate on a full-time basis in the event of another surge in the pandemic and we do not know if the public examinations will take place, despite the Minister for Education assurances that they will. In the meantime, all that we can do is to continue to prepare for GCSE, AS and A level examinations to the best of our ability and put plans in place for the switch to remote learning if that is required.

We have been faced with an enormous challenge in terms of keeping our school community safe whilst continuing to operate on a full-time basis and this has required a massive team effort involving pupils, parents, staff and Governors. Pupils learn best on a face-face basis, they thrive on the social interaction with their peers and staff and a number of our pupils rely heavily on the support of pastoral staff in school due to difficulties that they face in their personal situations. Therefore, we have willingly put all of these arrangements in place. The closure of all schools from 20 March until August this year has reinforced what so many of us already knew - schools are not just institutions where teaching and learning takes place, they are communities with people and relationships at the centre.

I hope that 2021 brings us closer to a return to normality and that our young people can enjoy all the school experiences that will bring them the most joy and create happy, lifelong memories.

I wish you and your families a very Happy Christmas and I hope you all stay safe and well.

Yours sincerely

Hilary Woods (Mrs)
Principal

PRIZE DAY

For the first time in the history of the School, as far as we know, our Annual Prize Distribution ceremony was cancelled due to a Department of Education directed extended half-term break. We had planned to have a morning Junior and an afternoon Senior ceremony on Friday 23rd October and we were very much looking forward to celebrating the achievements of our young people. The prize winners received correspondence by post containing their certificate and, as appropriate, the photograph of the cup or shield that they had been awarded.

EVENTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Zara Meadows Poetry Prize



We were absolutely delighted to learn that Zara Meadows, M6 had been selected as one of the top 15 winners in the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award 2020. Zara was selected from over 6,000 entrants and over 15,000 poems this year from across the world – an amazing and impressive achievement.

Zara's winning poem "Found", published below, will be published on The Poetry Society's website and featured on their YouTube and Vimeo channels during this week. Zara has also received an invitation to attend a writing residential

at the Arvon Centre in Shropshire.

Thank you to all of Zara's teachers in the English Department over her school career who have helped to inspire, develop and nurture her poetic talent.

Zara is planning to study English at university next year.

Congratulations to Zara and we wish her continued success with her creative writing in the future.

Found

d'y'see your man there, in the -
in the grounds of the city hall,
d'y'hear he used to be a slaver?
kept slaves 'n' that, sold thum

as well i think i read.
an'd'y'hear there's a bunch of themins
- themins at that owl protest the other
week - want 'im taken down?

aye i did read that an all
bit of a joke if you ask me
not sayin' a agree wi slaves
slavery, a mean a don't agree wi it
but sure every man an his dog were
at it in them days, sure what's the need
goin tearin down our history, our culture
sure it won't change the fact that it
happened like - and do you know what else -
it's themins, them same radicals
want to collapse that wee man in the grounds
of the city hall, that'd be sweet wi it bein'
replaced wi a statue of
Stalin, err some shite
an sure didn' he own slaves an all?

Zara Meadows

Ulster U18 Hockey Squad

Congratulations to Olivia Beattie, Form 5 and Emma Uprichard, L6 who have been announced in the Ulster U18 hockey squad were to compete in the inter-provincial series in Dublin over Halloween half-term (unfortunately this event was unable to proceed).

ABP Angus Youth Challenge



Our ABP Angus Youth Challenge entry was again up and running at the Academy. Their ideas for environmentally friendly and sustainable beef production in Northern Ireland impressed the industry judges and our team made it the semi-final stages of this highly competitive competition.

Our team members, Lucy Coulter, Adrib Ahmed, Ethan Willey and Anna Wilson (pictured left to right) were commended on the high standard of their entry and for their presentation skills. This is especially impressive given that their entry was made during the challenges of Covid-19 and was very much a result of their own independence, determination and skill.

We congratulate our 2020 team and know that the skills developed, through taking part in this competition, will serve each of them well as they progress in their future studies and careers.

The Pink Paper Bag Project

To make every day a little easier and to address the issue of Period Poverty, the Pink Paper Bag Project was launched during Wellbeing week in September by Mrs Caroline Hughes. In recent research in N.I. it has been discovered that girls who do not have access to sanitary products accrue significant absences from school. To ensure that all our female pupils have the products that they need we began providing them in school. The female staff kindly donated the products to get the project started and Mrs Hughes was overwhelmed by their generosity. During a trial in September, we realised that there is a need for these products in our school. With that in mind, parents were made aware of the project in October via Pupil Notes and there are now donations made from within our wider school community on a daily basis. Every girl in school now has access to free sanitary products every day – girls now have one less thing to worry about!



The project has been featured on BBC Radio Ulster on the Lynette Fay show and on Evening Extra. Kate Sturgess, Anna Wilson and Cassie Watt were also interviewed for BBC Newsline NI by Robbie Meredith. Their enthusiasm, motivation and care for others shone through in their interviews and they did the Academy proud.

The school community has come together to support each other: we have collected donations, raised funds and shown how much can be achieved with a little kindness. We are very proud of the project ambassadors and of our school community and hope that we can continue the project in 2021.

OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

Andrew Patterson Appeal – diagnosed with crippling disease.



In March 2013, Andrew Patterson, ex-Ireland international cricketer and father of three, was diagnosed with Spastic Paraplegia (a rare hereditary disorder which results in wheelchair confinement). Whilst the initial deterioration was slow, Andrew has now discovered that the mutation of the SPG7 gene which is responsible for the disorder means his decline will be rapid and wheelchair confinement is imminent.

As an ex-international and first-class cricketer, Andrew has decided to take the route of physiotherapy for the time being, avoiding oral medication which inevitably carries side-effects. In preparation for the deterioration of his legs, the family managed to adapt their home to accommodate for the changes, exhausting all their funds, costing

over £200 000, but not anticipating that the deterioration would be so rapid, now falling £25 000 short and in need of a lift to allow Andrew access to the bedroom and the rest of the upstairs. Reconstructing the staircase would have cost far more than originally anticipated so the advice is to install a lift and this is where your support comes in.

I have known Andrew for 15 years. Once an extremely active father to Ella (14), Brooke (12) and Drew (10), he no longer has the ability to be as hands-on as he once was. With wife Sarah working full time, Andrew often has to rely on his in-laws to help with the children, whilst still holding down a full-time teaching job. Having won 61 caps for Ireland as a wicketkeeper and batsman, Andrew has faced some pretty gruelling challenges, but none such as this. His cricketing career, both international and domestic (having played first-class cricket for Sussex CCC), made him an attractive option when he decided to dedicate his working life to passing his knowledge on to the next generation. As a full-time PE teacher at King's College School (Wimbledon) from 2001-2007 and Caterham School since, Andrew's love for sport and coaching has had an abrupt and premature ending. His livelihood and family life have been affected beyond recognition and now with a lack of funds, the family are facing even more challenges.

It is my goal to raise £25 000 to support the Patterson family in the hope that a sense of normality can be returned to their lives, albeit in the shape of a small indoor lift. Financial burdens and physical deterioration are enough to deal with as a young family - it is my plea that we help ease the load.

Please note that any additional funds raised over and above the £25 000 goal will go directly to the family to aid in further renovations and needs. It may be that Andrew will require equipment above what the NHS may be able to provide. Given that there are many unknowns with regards to the prognosis, hidden costs in the future will no doubt be needed and all additional funds will be used for these purposes only.

****UPDATE**** - Andrew Patterson Appeal: Phase 2

In under 48 hours, the total target of £25 000 was smashed. I have had numerous requests (from donors) to up the target to further support the family. In response to this, I have consulted Andrew and Sarah and they have welcomed the request. In addition to the lift (which they can now install - whoop whoop!), a disabled en suite will need to be installed off their bedroom and ramps set up around the site to accommodate and allow for disabled access. This will incur further costs, and according to a recent

meeting with the council, estimates (including the lift) average at around £75 000. I, therefore, propose a new target. Please continue to share this page with those on your social media accounts and beyond. Thank you from both the family and myself.

Please see the NCU (Northern Cricket Union) Website for details (Article provided by Philip McKenna, Secretary of the Old Boys' Association)

TONY DANKER to become Director General of the CBI

In June 2020, it was announced that former BRA pupil Tony Danker, who left school in 1990, was to become Director General of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), taking up his duties on 1st November and continuing a highly successful career in the world of business.

After graduating with a degree in Law from the University of Manchester, where he also acted as Chair of the Union of British Students, Tony joined the office of the Chief Rabbi, where he served as Deputy Director to the Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks. In 1996 he became Divisional Director in the Public Affairs Division of the Communications Group, the UK's longest established independent public relations consultancy and which aimed to employ "the best of the best". As Divisional Director he was responsible for the delivery of carefully formulated public affairs programmes designed to enable clients to engage their audiences in the most effective way in the support of key objectives.

In 1998, Tony was appointed Director of Communications in the well-established global management consultancy McKinsey and Co. He took a mid-career break to study at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, obtaining a Masters of Public Administration degree and proceeded to become McKinsey's Senior Government Consultant. In this capacity he was based in both Washington and London, acting as a consultant in public sector practice.

In 2008, Tony became a Special Adviser in HM Treasury, based in the Cabinet Office and then working with HM Treasury on public sector reform and the economy.

In another departure in 2010, Tony joined the Guardian Media PLC, focusing on policy and strategy. Two years later he became International Director, responsible for the development of international business, including the launch of Guardian US and Guardian Australia. He also served as the organisation's leader of its international, rights and syndication functions and assumed responsibility for the management of its philanthropic partnerships. He then became, in August 2015, Guardian News and Media Chief Strategy Officer, responsible for the Guardian's strategy, business development and data and insight capability, which entailed working on new markets, new businesses and strategic partnerships, as well as global expansion, business development and analyses functions.

Possibly one of the highlights thus far of Tony Danker's glittering career came in October 2017 when he became Chief Executive Officer of "To Be Business", a government and industry body launched by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne and funded by a group of FTSE 100 chairmen and the Chancellor, with the aim of making British industries more productive.

Tony built the organisation from scratch and it now reaches over 5000 small and medium sized enterprise leaders participating in its programmes, with dozens of leading UK companies forming partnerships with "Be the Business". Currently, an important aim of "Be the Business" lies in supporting businesses through the Covid-19 crisis.

Tony Danker has been appointed to the leadership of the CBI at a critical moment for UK companies. The Covid-19 pandemic has plunged the economy into deep recession, with the UK poised to sever formal links with the European Union at the end of the Brexit transition period in December. The CBI, working alongside the trades unions and business groups, will have a key role to play in shaping the government's economic response to the crisis and improving the country's productivity record.

Article provided by Jim Carolan, BRA Alumni Office

STEPHEN SMARTT elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 2020

Stephen Smartt is an astrophysicist who specialises in stellar evolution, supernovae, and time domain sky surveys. After leaving Belfast Royal Academy in 1986, he studied physics and applied mathematics at Queen's University, Belfast and was awarded a PhD in astrophysics in 1996.

Stephen later worked at the Isaac Newton group of telescopes and held a fellowship at the University of Cambridge. He returned to Belfast in 2004 and established a group working on stellar evolution, supernovae and time domain sky surveys. He is credited with the discovery of stars that explode as supernovae, measuring their mass, luminosity and the chemical elements synthesised. He is Professor of Astrophysics at the School of Mathematics and Physics at Queen's University, Belfast.

Stephen Smartt was awarded the Philip Leverhulme Prize in 2005, awarded by the Leverhulme Trust to recognise the achievement of outstanding researchers whose work has already attracted international recognition and whose future career is exceptionally promising. He is a member of the Royal Irish Academy and in 2020 was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society.

Article provided by Jim Carolan, BRA Alumni Office

PAUL SEAWRIGHT awarded OBE in 2020 Queen's Birthday Honours

Paul Seawright is the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Ulster. He was formerly Head of Belfast School of Art and he had been Dean of Art, Media and Design at the University of Wales, Newport. He also sits on the advisory boards of the Imperial War Museum and the British Council in London, having previously served as a board member of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. He is best known for his early work from his home city of Belfast, particularly the series *Sectarian Murder*, 1988. More recently, he has made photographic studies of Urban Africa and America.

Paul enjoys an international profile as an artist and researcher. His work is held in many museum collections, including the Irish Museum of Modern Art, the Tate, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the International Centre of Photography, New York and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Rome. In 2002, he was commissioned by the Imperial War Museum as War Artist for Afghanistan. His photographs of minefields and battle sites have been exhibited internationally and, in the same year, he was awarded the Irish Museum of Modern Art/Glen Dimplex award for a major contribution to Irish Art.

Paul has a first class honours degree in Photography, Film and Television and was awarded a PhD by the University of Wales in 2007. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Art and the Royal Photographic Society, History Fellow of Cardiff Metropolitan University and former Vice President of the Royal Ulster Academy of Art. He has also held Visiting Professorships at Sheffield Hallam, the University of South Wales and the University of Porto. He is the author of numerous publications and, in 2003, was the subject of a BBC4 documentary by Fintan O'Toole.

Paul Seawright was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the 2020 Queen's Birthday Honours for services to higher education and the arts.

Article provided by Jim Carolan, BRA Alumni Office

Professor Geoffrey Beattie FBPSS FRSM FRSA - Class of 1971

Former BRA pupil, Geoffrey Beattie, is Professor of Psychology at Edge Hill University and also a broadcaster and author. He has received international recognition for his ground-breaking work on trophy hunting and climate change and his book, *Trophy Hunting*, is on a shortlist of three to win the Taylor & Francis' Outstanding Book and Digital Product Award.

Professor Beattie took place in the first digital festival "Different Ever After" this October hosted by the British Embassy in Moscow. The aim of the digital festival was to bring together the best of contemporary British science and innovation, sustainable development and green economy, accessibility and education, arts and culture, and showcase the UK's expertise in an engaging and inspiring way suitable to the new circumstances of 2020. Professor Beattie delivered a session entitled "How to avoid a climate catastrophe" which received a great deal of positive feedback.

Professor Beattie delivered a keynote speech at the Italian National Geographic Festival of Science in Rome in November (virtually) on overcoming the psychological barriers to climate change. In the run up to the critical and global COP26, he was also invited to contribute to the U.K. Government's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Committee's report on "COP26: Principles and Priorities – a POST survey of expert views". This report was prepared for the Secretary of State for BEIS (and Minister for COP26) by the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST), using the responses that a panel of experts provided.

Information provided by Professor Beattie.

DAVID SNOWBALL made a Companion of the order of the Bath (CB)

David Snowball attended the Academy between 1969 and 1976. His late father, John Snowball, taught French and Russian at BRA, and also coached boys' hockey and was in charge of the ATC squadron. His brother Alan followed through the school three years after him.

David was made a Companion of the Order of the Bath (CB) in the 2020 Queen's Birthday Honours List for services to occupational health and safety. He worked for the Health and Safety Executive for 35 years in various locations across Britain after completing his BA and PhD at Leeds University. He retired last December, having spent my last year and a bit as Acting Chief Executive.

Article provided by Philip McKenna, Secretary of the Old Boys' Association

Mr David Scofield QC appointed as High Court Judge

Mr David Scofield QC completed his law degree at University College, Oxford, where he was awarded a distinction in Law Moderations and went on to obtain a First Class Honours BA in Jurisprudence in August 1998, which was later converted to an MA. Mr Scofield QC then went on to complete his Certificate in Professional Legal Studies and graduated with a distinction in June 1999. He was also awarded the Sir Eoin Higgins Prize for the Top Bar Student and the Williamson Trust Fund Prize for the Highest Achiever in the Exit Examination. Mr Scofield QC obtained a Master's Degree in Human Rights and Discrimination Law from Queens University, Belfast in 2003.

Mr Scoffield QC was called to the Bar of Northern Ireland in September 1999 and the Bar of Ireland in July 2014. He was appointed to Silk in 2011, at the age of 34.

Until his appointment as a High Court Judge, Mr Scoffield QC was in independent practice, specialising in public, administrative and constitutional law, in which areas he has regularly appeared in cases in the United Kingdom Supreme Court.

Mr Scoffield QC is also a Bencher of the Honourable Society of the Inn of Court of Northern Ireland and, in January 2020, was appointed a Temporary Judge of the High Court of Northern Ireland.

Article provided by Philip McKenna, Secretary of the Old Boys' Association

Gerald Simpson QC Appointed Temporary High Court Judge



Pictured (L-R): David Scoffield QC, Daniel Friedman QC, Karen Quinlivan QC, Lord Chief Justice Sir Declan Morgan, Stephen Shaw QC, Gerald Simpson QC and Michael Humphreys QC

Gerald Simpson was appointed a temporary High Court Judge, by the Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland, Sir Declan Morgan on 24th, January, 2020.

Article provided by Philip McKenna, Secretary of the Old Boys' Association

Barry Fox - (6th March 1948 - 28th Dec 2019)

We first met Barry and his older brother Peter (BRA 1957-1963 who died after a long illness in Baltimore USA in December 2018) when we all went to BRA in the late 50's.

Barry attended from 1959-1966 where he was good at sports especially Athletics, was involved heavily with the Air Squadron and then moved on to Queen's University in 1966.

For summer jobs Barry was an AB seaman on a cargo ship on the St Lawrence, diving instructor in the Sinai Desert, delivered beer for a brewery in Eastbourne and a few others.

At Queen's University he started a diving club and joined the Air Corps. He quit his Law Degree studies for a more exciting option with ABC news, as a cameraman for American TV in Belfast.

Subsequently he joined RTE and was involved with some of the most newsworthy incidents of the "Troubles", from Newry to Bloody Sunday. Although he had to leave eventually, he was by then established as a highly regarded news reporter and war correspondent.

He set up a TV news film and editing business based in St John's Wood, London from where he covered a dozen wars. From the Middle East in 1973 for the Yom Kippur war to Cambodia and Vietnam via Cyprus and after 9 months in Saigon in 1975, was one of the last few out (by climbing the US

Barry called his firm Fox Television. He expanded to New York where after a year, he felt forced to take on a new but larger firm using his Fox TV name and inevitably, he came off second best.

Barry then moved into producing and directing news with CBS in the US.

After Viacom took over CBS, Barry left the US in 2000 and moved with his new wife (and love of his life) Ingrid to her native Australia. They lived in the Barossa Valley where his in-laws had been making wine for over a century. Barry then qualified in building design and spent a lot of this time designing and building various structures and homes.

These latter years were split between Adelaide and their house in Gran Sasso d'Italia national park with just occasional visits to N Ireland, and 5 years living in New Zealand.

Despite suffering from cancer for 11 years, Barry never lost his dry sense of humour and his balanced response to both disaster and triumph.

An amazing character, irrepressible and modest, Barry had close friends throughout the world and we were privileged to include ourselves.

Article provided by Robert Henderson (BRA 1957-1963) and Sam (SEJ) Henderson (BRA 1959-1965)

OLD GIRLS' ASSOCIATION

Christmas Wreaths

The Old Girls' Association offered Christmas wreaths for sale at the start of December and sold almost 100 to staff, parents and alumni.



Christmas Cards



BRA Old Girls' Association are pleased to work with one of our Members, offering these linocut cards for sale.

For every card sold £1 will be donated to the OGA.

Various colours of each style available.

To purchase please go to www.mirievill.com/cards-and-stationery

Enter code ACADEMY20 to ensure donations are tracked.

M6 Girls



We normally have a 'festive break' just before Christmas for the M6 girls but circumstances this year meant that this could not happen. Instead, we arranged for selection boxes and a Christmas card to be given to each M6 girl as a Christmas token from the Old Girls' Association.



Listening Service



The Old Girls' Association has funded a listening service which is available for all pupils in School and offers an invaluable service in terms of pastoral care for the pupils.

THE OWL



The Owl 2020 is available to read, or download, on the school website by following this link:

http://belfastroyalacademy.com/?page_id=5801&wppa-album=27&wppa-photo=207&wppa-cover=0&wppa-occur=1

KEEPING IN TOUCH

The aim of the Alumni Office is to engage with our past pupils. We can help you to remain connected to the School and to your former classmates. We can help to put you back in touch with old school friends and assist with the organisation of reunions, visits to the School and other events. The Alumni Office also administers the Old Girls' and Old Boys' Associations membership and email communications. An Alumni Calendar of Events is available in the Alumni section of the school website.

Your contribution, feedback and suggestions to this Newsletter are always welcomed. If you have a piece of news that you think others would be interested in, please email us with an accompanying photo. The Alumni Newsletter is published 3 times a year in December, March and June.

We appreciate your help to ensure that your contact details are up to date and to actively encourage friends, colleagues, siblings and other family members who were pupils at Belfast Royal Academy to join the alumni family.

Thank you for your continued interest in and support of Belfast Royal Academy.

The School will be closed from Friday 18th December to Friday 1st January inclusive.

We wish you a very merry Christmas and all our best wishes for 2021!

**Alumni Office
Belfast Royal Academy
3 – 17 Cliftonville Road
BELFAST BT14 6JL
028 9074 0423**