



Alumni Newsletter

June 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



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

SCHOOL EVENTS AND NEWS

"There are decades where nothing happens, and there are weeks where decades happen." Vladimir Lenin



Amid the announcement that the Government had taken the decision to close schools from Monday 23 March and to cancel all physical examinations, staff wished to provide M6 pupils with an appropriate farewell.

Friday 20 March was the last day for M6 and was marked with the traditional photograph in front of the Crombie building. Mr Irwin organised for an ice-cream van in the playground and pizzas were served in the Jackson Suite where there were a number of short presentations.

Whilst it was not how we would have wished to say goodbye to our senior pupils at the end of their school career, the pupils were extremely appreciative of the efforts made in a short period of time and spirits, were in the main, very positive.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Ulster Schools' Cup Winners 2020



The entire school community was delighted with the success of the 1st XI hockey team who won the Ulster Hockey Schools' Cup in a decisive 4:2 victory against Friends' School Lisburn. Goals were scored by Niamh McIvor, Megan Warke, Julia Uprichard (Captain) and Abbie Branniff.

There was fantastic support from pupils, parents, staff, Governors and former pupils for the match at Lisnagarvey.

The following day, members of the PE department organised a special outside assembly to enable the entire school to pay tribute to the team and for the cup to be presented to the school. Later on that evening the team, parents and staff enjoyed a celebratory reception at the Academy Club.

This win qualified the team to participate in the All-Ireland Kate Russell final in Galway at the end of March. Obviously the impact of Covid-19 meant that this event was postponed, possibly until September.

Netball



Commiserations, but very well played, to the Intermediate Netball squad, who finished runners-up against Wallace (15-11) in their League final on 12 March. It was a great display of netball from both teams.

Congratulations to Nada Hawela, Catelyn Burns and Siobhan Baine who have been selected for the Netball Northern Ireland squad for the U17 European Championships 2020.

1st XV



The team were defeated by R.B.A.I. 49:12 at Osborne Park. They then faced Down High School on 22 February in the quarter final of the Plate Competition. Despite leading 14:12 with 10 minutes to go, B.R.A. lost 17:14 as D.H.S. scored late on. The team had suffered a number of injuries after the match against R.B.A.I.

Medallion Rugby



The team played Campbell College Belfast in the semi-final of the Medallion Shield on Saturday 29th February at Osborne Park.

Whilst they suffered a defeat, we are extremely proud that the team reached the stage in the competition and know that firm foundations have been laid for these players as they progress in their rugby career.

U14 Rugby Team



Congratulations to the U14 s rugby team who defeated C.C.B. in the final of the Plate at the R.B.A.I. Tournament. The boys defeated Dromore, Bangor, and Coleraine in the group stage losing one match to R.B.A.I. They defeated Sullivan in the semi-final.

Bridge



Well done to our Bridge teams.

In the Irish Schools' Pairs, Joshua Boyd and Xander Todd finished 2nd.

In the Irish Under 19 Teams' Tournament, the B.R.A. team of Xander Todd, Joshua Boyd, EJ Atienza and JP Miller finished 2nd and were the top placed school team.

Ballymena Music Festival



Congratulations to the Senior Strings, who were placed 1st in the String Orchestra Class with their performance of 'Lady Gaga Fugue', against St Malachy's College and Ballymena Academy.

And a huge well done to all the pupils who were placed in their classes.

Jonny Hayward's double bass playing was of such a high standard that he was selected to perform in the Beggs and Partners Young Instrumentalist of the Year on Saturday 29

February and won the Most Promising String Player at the Festival and £50.

Queen's University, Belfast French Debate



Congratulations to our A-Level French students for winning their debate at QUB on 4 March. Our team, comprising of Layla Creaney, Varia Peters and Alex Pina Semedo, presented convincing arguments in French, and fought off stiff competition to win their debate against St Patrick's Grammar School, Armagh, with Varia Peters being selected as the best speaker of the group. Well done to our students for this fantastic and well-deserved result.

Dance Competition

Big congratulations to our talented dancers, who took part and were enormously successful at a dance competition on 6 March, Nicmac - Northern Ireland Creative Movement & Aerobic Championships 2020. Well done everyone!!

Junior Maths



On 6 March the Junior Maths team (Harrison Kirk F3, Oliver Pearce F3, Sofia Rea-Lavery F2 and Jamie Wilson F2) completed in the regional final of the UK Maths Trust's Team Challenge. They performed very well and came second in Northern Ireland (by only one point out of the 240 available).

Rotary Club – Towards a Better Understanding

Congratulations to Elise Swain L6, who won a place on the TABU (Towards A Better Understanding) 10-day exchange visit to Chicago in April (postponed). After a rigorous final selection process, which included a 5-minute personal presentation, followed by a 15-minute interview by a panel of Rotarians, Elise was successfully chosen to be part of the 6-person group.

Swimming



The Form 1 Swimming team raced at the Irish Minor Schools' Championships at the beginning of February in the National Aquatic Centre, Dublin.

The Girls' Relay team were 3rd in the Medley Relay and 4th in the Freestyle Relay and the Boys' Relay team finished 7th in the Medley Relay and 9th in the Freestyle Relay.

Football

Well done to Form 1 pupil Myles Mateer, who has been picked for a South Belfast Youth League select team to play in the American Cup in Minnesota, USA in July (situation permitting).

Athletics

Congratulations to Bryanna Catney (U19 800m) and Erin McMahon (U19 400m) on their Silver medals at NI and Ulster Athletics Indoor Championships at Abbottstown at the beginning of February.

Environmental Group

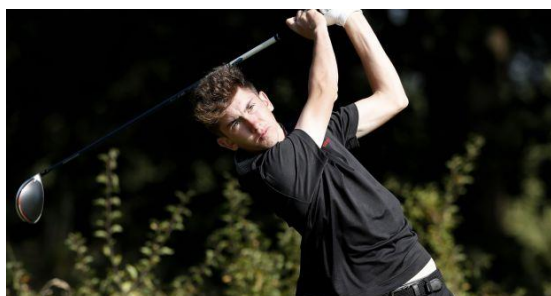
The B.R.A. Environmental Society attended the 'Women on the Front Line of Climate Change' Exhibition at Stormont on 11 February. Students listened to the stories of African women and how they are coping with changing climate in their lives. As the producers of much of the food grown on small farms, Africa's women farmers are locked in a struggle to provide for their families in the face of drier, hotter and more unpredictable weather conditions.

Chemistry – Top of the Bench competition

Congratulations to our team of KS3 and KS4 Chemistry students (Joseph Golden, Oscar Hill, EJ Nazareth & Nada Hawela), who finished in a terrific 2nd place in the 'Top of the Bench' competition yesterday in the David Keir Building at Queen's University.

Top of the Bench involves teams from 16 schools answering both Chemistry general knowledge/GCSE specification questions and practical work in one of QUB's laboratories.

Golf



At 17 years old, B.R.A. pupil Tom McKibbin can comfortably be considered one of the world's best junior golfers. Last year, he won the prestigious Junior Invitational title at Sage Valley Golf Club in the United States. Tom's ascent in the golfing world is put on hold for now but he hopes to get back in action soon.

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

Friends of the Academy Fashion Show



FOTA arranged a hugely successful fashion show on 7 February which featured a number of fashion outlets modelled by pupils and staff. The finale showcased the work of former pupil Nicola Glass who is the New York based designer for Kate Spade.

The evening brought together the whole school community, created a fantastic atmosphere, highlighted the work of a very worthwhile charity (Outside In) and raised very welcome funds for the school. We are indebted to all members of FOTA who worked tirelessly

over a number of months to bring this event to such a successful conclusion. Special thanks to Kim Burns for co-ordinating the evening.

Charity Events



The B.R.A. Environmental Committee raised over £700 through their Australian wildfire crisis fundraising efforts. Money was raised for the New South Wales R.S.P.C.A and the N.S.W. Fire Service. Students gave very generously during a charity collection and there was also a bake sale.

Senior Scripture Union



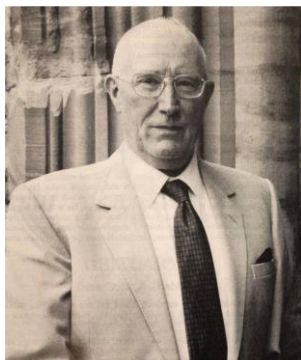
Fifty-four pupils and six staff enjoyed a fantastic Senior SU Weekend in Portadown on 7, 8 & 9 February.

Spring Concert

The annual Spring Concert was able to take place in the Ulster Hall on Thursday 12 March, despite concerns about the coronavirus pandemic. There were slightly fewer people present in the audience than previous years but it was a magnificent performance.



News of Former Staff



Mr George McConnell

The school flag was flown at half-mast on 3 March in honour of the memory of former member of staff Mr George McConnell, who died recently. Mr McConnell was Head of Economics and a Senior Teacher, and introduced the study of Economics to the School, which he taught for almost 40 years.

We would like to acknowledge the contribution that Mr McConnell made to the School community through his commitment and expertise in the delivery of Economics over such a lengthy period of time, and extend our condolences on his passing to the family circle.

We received an outpouring of kind comments from former pupils who all remember Mr McConnell fondly.

Mr Paul Cupples

The School community was deeply saddened to learn of the death of our esteemed former colleague, Mr Paul Cupples in June.

Paul was appointed to Belfast Royal Academy as a teacher of mathematics in 1980. He took early retirement as a result of unexpected illness - a loss that was keenly felt by all his friends and colleagues throughout the School community.

Paul played a central role in the establishment of computing and ICT in the School, introducing A Level Computing in 1996 and A level ICT in 1999 before becoming Head of the ICT and Computing Department in 2002.



He was a man of high professional standards - exacting, conscientious and highly organised. These were qualities he relied on throughout his time as Chairman of the Computer Studies Panel at Queen's University and as Assistant Examiner for various specifications at CCEA. As Head of Department, he had the vision to undertake new ventures and the determination to see them through.

Paul's five children all attended the Academy, and his wife Jessie travelled with School to Malawi on at least 2 occasions.

OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

The **B.R.A. OBA Annual General Meeting** was scheduled for 7 April, 2020, but this had to be postponed due to the Covid19 pandemic. The President, Mr Moore Dickson has remained as President in a temporary capacity until the AGM and the handover to Mr Trevor Sturgess, our Senior Vice-President, can be completed. Mr Bobby Gray is our Junior Vice-President.



Monthly Luncheon Club

The monthly lunches attract between 40 and 50 members – mostly retired members of the Association. The attached photo is from the November 2019 Lunch at Royal Belfast Golf Club. Robin Reid initiated and coordinated these lunches for many years, with the help of local hosts. The Old Boys' Association greatly appreciates Robin's efforts, and we are grateful to Robb Fletcher for stepping in to run these in the future. Due to the pandemic, the

lunches have been suspended until further notice.

Business Breakfasts: A "Business Breakfast", organised by Michael McDowell, Clare McDowell and Louise Brogan, was held on 13 February 2020. These breakfasts are aimed at former pupils who are still working and who would like to widen their business contacts. Some current B.R.A. pupils have also attended. These breakfasts have had between 20 and 50 attendees, and are usually held at the Ten Square Hotel. The speakers in February were **Anne Madden**, Policy and Communications Manager, Sustrans, and **Jonathon McAlpine**, Chief Executive, East Belfast Enterprise.



BRA Business Breakfast at Ten Square Hotel (13-Feb-2020)
Michael McDowell (Organiser & Breakfast MC) Clare McDowell (Organiser) Anne Madden (Presenter, Comms Mgr, Sustrans) Jonathon McAlpine (Presenter, Chief Exec - East Belfast Enterprise) Louise Brogan (Organiser)

Last years' Annual Dinner was held at The Europa Hotel on the 23 November 2019. It was hosted by the B.R.A. OBA President, Moore Dickson. This is the major event in our calendar.

The speakers at the Dinner were:

- The Principal proposed the toast to the Association.
- The President responded and proposed the toast to our guests.
- Mr Paul Crute replied on behalf of the guests, and spoke on the importance of a good education.
- Mr William Crawley proposed the toast to the school.

The success of the Dinner was again due, in no small measure, to the Dinner Secretary, Iain Knox, and his team, who work extremely hard each year to ensure that this event runs smoothly.



B.R.A. OBA Annual Dinner Speakers - The Europa - 23-Nov-2019
William Crawley Moore Dickson Mrs Hilary Woods Paul Crute
President BRA OBA BRA Principal



B.R.A. OBA Annual Dinner - "Four BRA Heads" - The Europa - 23-Nov-2019
Billy Young Mrs Hilary Woods Moore Dickson Bill Sillery
BRA Head: 2000-2008 BRA Principal since 2017 President BRA OBA BRA Head: 1980-2000
BRA Head: 2009-2017

Please note that the Annual Dinner, which was scheduled for 21st November 2020, has been postponed until further notice. This is due to the uncertainties caused by the Covid19 pandemic.

The B.R.A. Former Pupils' London Dinner

was held at the R.A.F. Club on Friday 13 March, 2020. It was hosted by the President, Moore Dickson. The Principal, Mrs Woods, proposed the toast to the Association, and Mr Michael Haslett responded. Next year's London Dinner is scheduled for Friday 12, March, 2021, subject to review.

Unfortunately, the 2020 Edinburgh Dinner had to be cancelled due to the Covid19 restrictions.



Belfast Royal Academy FP London Dinner @ the R.A.F. Club (13-Mar-2020)
Hilary Woods Moore Dickson Michael Haslett Shirley Haslett David Haslett
(BRA Principal) (President BRA OBA) (Speaker) (Organiser/Past President)

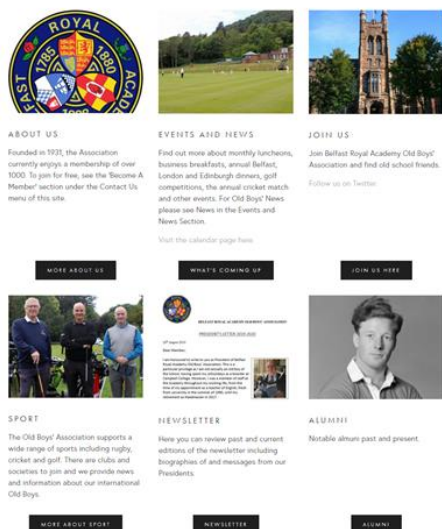
Golf: The Association plans to hold two golf outings each year. The first outing, on 11 June 2020, at Malone Golf Club had to be cancelled. The second outing is scheduled for Royal Belfast Golf Club on Friday 11 September 2020, and is still on at this stage. Any former pupil interested in playing in these competitions should contact Ken Knox at ken@cd-group.com.

Rugby: Tom Stewart played for Ireland U20s in the Six Nations competition. Ireland has a 36-20 win against Wales on 7 February and played Italy on 6 March. Tom featured in an episode of Irish Rugby TV on 19 February <https://www.irishrugby.ie/u20/tom-stewart/> Iain Henderson was named club captain for Ulster in November 2019. He was a member of the Ireland squad competing in the Six Nations competition.

Cricket: The annual cricket match between the B.R.A. Old Boys and the B.R.A. 1st XI could not be scheduled this year. The photo of the Castle Grounds is a reminder that it is a perfect location and we look forward to these events in the future.



Welcome to Belfast Royal Academy Old Boys' Association.



B.R.A. Old Boys' Association Website: The B.R.A. OBA website is at www.braoba.com and has had a major revision. Please visit to find news and archives.

Donations: The President, Moore Dickson, on behalf of the B.R.A. Old Boys' Association presented a cheque to the Principal for £4,250 for various items, which included physics apparatus to equip a laboratory to commemorate Professor James Stirling, part funding of the hockey video tower and some frames for school drama posters.

The B.R.A. OBA donated £1,000 to Captain Tom Moore's NHS appeal on 30 April, 2020 (his 100th birthday) - "with many thanks to all those who risk their lives to care for us".



Mr Jack Simpson

Jack Simpson, Former B.R.A. pupil who passed away on 30 August 2019. Mr Simpson served in the RAF during WWII and was awarded an OBE in the 2002 Christmas honours list for his charitable services to Irish and UK ex-service men.

Many congratulations to Old Boy **Tony Danker** who has been appointed the next Director-General of the CBI.

In 2017 Tony was appointed the first CEO of Be the Business, the Business movement founded by a group of FTSE-100 Chairmen and the Chancellor. Tony Danker has built the organisation from scratch, now reaching tens of thousands of firms every month with over 5000 SME leaders participating in its programmes and dozens of leading UK companies forming partnerships with Be the Business. He holds a Masters' in Public Administration from Harvard Kennedy School and a Law Degree from the University of Manchester.



We warmly congratulate OB **Professor Stephen Smartt FRS** from the School of Mathematics and Physics at Queen's University Belfast on being elected a Fellow of the Royal Society.

Many congratulations to OBs **Gerald Simpson** QC and **David Scoffield** QC on their recent appointments as Temporary High Court Judges.



Following a £300k investment in pancreatic and oesophageal cancer research at Queen's University Dr Richard Turkington, Oncologist and Cancer Researcher at Queen's, is leading the new research.

Dr Turkington is a former B.R.A. pupil.

Contacting the B.R.A. Old Boys' Association: Please inform the Alumni Office at alumni@belfastroyalacademy.net of any items of news for inclusion in The Owl and the Old Boys' Association website. Any notification of births/ marriages/ deaths or career developments etc. will be very welcome and of considerable interest to other Old Boys.

Please notify the Alumni Office at alumni@belfastroyalacademy.net to register with the Association, and of changes of email address, or contact details. Notification of reunions is very welcome.

Michael McDowell promotes the Association on Social Media through the Old Boys' Twitter account @TheBRAoldboys.

OLD GIRLS' ASSOCIATION



On 19 October we hosted our second '**Afternoon Tea**' at The Dunadry Hotel, which we are pleased to report was booked to capacity. It was a fabulous day, the food was delicious and the surroundings were beautiful. We would like to thank the Venue Hunters, owned by one of our Members, Rachel Lowther, for organising this event.

We have provisionally booked our Afternoon Tea for October 2020 at Ten Square, Belfast. This will be subject to government guidance and social distancing rules.

Please email

braoldgirls@outlook.com for further details or to register your interest.



The Old Girls' Association were very excited, along with the whole Academy community to congratulate the **1st XI** on their historic win in the **2020 hockey School's Cup**. We marked this amazing achievement by presenting the winning team and their coach with a silver necklace. The team and coach, Nadine Nicholl were delighted with their achievement and are looking forward to playing in the 'All Ireland' finals when able to do so.



Unfortunately, we had to cancel the 1st XI vs OGA hockey match, which was scheduled for 27 March. We look forward to the next opportunity to play this friendly match.



As the COVID 19 pandemic developed the Old Girls' Association felt that it was appropriate to honour the former pupils of BRA who were working as '**Key Workers**' during this crisis. What started as a plan to create one video, featuring a range of former pupils, developed in a series of four emotive videos, which received several thousand views on social media. We will forever be proud of and indebted to all former pupils who worked as keyworkers during this crisis.

Please do take the time to watch these videos by clicking on the links below:

<https://youtu.be/UuL6LjCelzM>

<https://youtu.be/q-3sCvn18k8>

<https://youtu.be/1I9vLMALyKg>



In May 2020 we made the decision to take orders for **hanging baskets** from Dundonald Nurseries, due to last year's success. We are delighted to report that we increased orders substantially, selling 110 baskets! All baskets were collected from the School playground, adhering to social distancing guidelines.

Proceeds will go directly towards initiatives within B.R.A.

Former pupil **Jazmin Campbell** is now working as a journalist in Luxembourg. Jazmin moved to Luxembourg in 2016. With a background in the study of languages (French and Spanish) and European history, Jazmin loves the diversity Luxembourg offers and enjoys travelling around Europe and beyond. As well as being a full-time journalist at Chronicle.lu, she regularly reads the news on the ARA City Radio Breakfast Show.



We love hearing from past pupils and if you would like to get in touch please email us on: braoldgirls@outlook.com

or follow us on:

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/BRAformergirls/> or

Twitter <https://twitter.com/BRAOldGirls>

The Owl 2019 is still available to read, or download, on the school website at:
http://belfastroyalacademy.com/?page_id=5801



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 to 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.

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.

**Alumni Office
Belfast Royal Academy
3 – 17 Cliftonville Road
BELFAST BT14 6JL
028 9074 0423
kholland303@bfsra.belfast.ni.sch.uk**