



BELFAST ROYAL ACADEMY OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

PRESIDENT'S LETTER 2021-2022

22th August 2021

Dear Member,

I am very honoured to be elected as President of the Belfast Royal Academy Old Boys' Association for the year 2021-22.

When I was originally approached in 2018 to follow the path of Junior and then Senior Vice President, who could possibly have seen what was in store for all of us in regard to the Covid Pandemic!

I am grateful to Moore Dickson, the previous President who carried out his duties during the year 2019-20 representing the Old Boys' Association and the School with distinction and great enthusiasm. As Covid and lockdown began to take its hold in the first quarter of 2020, virtually all activities of the Association were suspended and the Committee decided not to hold its Annual General Meeting in April 2020. It was also decided that Moore Dickson would continue in office as President until matters surrounding Covid would be clearer. Moore actually ended up holding the fort for 2 years instead of one as Covid took its hold. Several committee meetings took place via Zoom during that period and in March 2021, it was decided to proceed with the AGM via Zoom in April 2021 at which I was elected President and the other Officers were elected for the oncoming year.

On behalf of the Association, I send my condolences to anyone connected with the Old Boys and indeed the school who lost loved ones due to the pandemic. Having had personal experience with my daughter working as a staff nurse in the Intensive Care Covid Unit in the Ulster Hospital throughout the time, I have the highest admiration for all key workers. I am certain there are a huge number of Alumni who carried out their duties over and above what was normally expected of them, even putting their own and their families at risk.

I would also like to pay tribute to the efforts of the Principal, Mrs Hilary Woods and all her staff during the various lockdowns in continuing to provide education to the pupils through online teaching. The difficulties of delivering the AQE transfer procedure and the criteria must have been extremely challenging and stressful for all involved.

I have had a connection with Belfast Royal Academy for 65 years. I started at the age of 7, first attending Duncairn when I was deemed old enough to travel home on the train on



my own to Jordanstown. I had spent my first two primary school years in the preparatory school belonging to Belfast High School which was held in St Patrick's Church hall in Jordanstown. Following a year at Duncairn, I moved on to Wingfield, and then to the main Grammar school buildings. I left BRA for QUB in 1967. I joined Academy Rugby Club in 1970 after graduating from Queen's and continued my links with the Old Boys' Association. My elder brother and my nephews and niece attended BRA followed by my great nephew who captained the first XV rugby team and my great niece who will be in sixth form in September. This gives an illustration of the value that the School places on family connections. I had leanings towards the scientific side of my education concentrating on maths, physics and chemistry at A level so I hope the more English orientated of the readers will forgive any grammatical errors I make in this letter.

On August 19th 2021, the first post-Covid monthly lunch took place at Royal Portrush Golf Club and I was delighted to attend as my first "real" event as President as the above picture verifies. There were 25 attendees at a very enjoyable lunch, though a little down in numbers from the usual August event. Hopefully, these lunches will be able to continue to take place throughout the autumn months and up to the summer of 2022. The monthly lunches, mainly held in golf clubs, were well supported pre-Covid and I hope we can get the numbers back up to similar levels fairly quickly. They are a great vehicle to meet up with old school friends, are on a very informal basis and have a reputation for good food. I would like to pay tribute to Robin Reid for his efforts in building up such a great activity over the years. I would like to thank Robb Fletcher for taking over the reins as lunch coordinator and also thank in advance, all the hosts who will be organising the lunches at their local club. Anyone interested in attending would be more than welcome. I know from speaking to a number of old boys from other schools, they are jealous of what we as an Association have created.

The Old Boys' Association Annual Dinner is scheduled for Saturday November 27th in The Europa Hotel. It is a great social occasion and an opportunity to catch up with old friends from the past or sometimes meet people that you hadn't seen since leaving school. I would especially like to encourage anyone who has an anniversary of leaving the school such as ten, twenty, twenty five years, etc, etc to try and get a table together of colleagues from your year. The absence of the Annual Dinner last year gives additional year groupings to explore carried over from 2021. Also Rugby, Cricket, and Hockey team anniversaries would be an ideal reason to come. The Committee would love to see as many younger people attending so that it is not a hall full of older "old boys". The Dinner is also a method of fundraising for projects for the school. The Dinner is not confined to Old Boys of the school so if anyone wishes to bring a guest they are more than welcome to do so. Details of the Dinner are on the website and on the Facebook page. Iain Knox is the initial contact as Dinner Secretary 075 9073 4061 email iainknox@cd-group.com. I am extremely grateful for the work Iain and indeed the table captains put in and hope that we can make this forthcoming dinner a very successful one.

The London Dinner is scheduled to be held in the RAF club on Friday 11th March 2022.

The Edinburgh Dinner is scheduled to be held in the New Club on Friday 22nd April 2022.

It is also hoped that the Business Breakfasts in the Ten Square Hotel which were established by Martin Blake and Michael McDowell can be reconvened in the future.

The annual Old Boys XI versus the School cricket match was unfortunately cancelled again this June due to the pandemic.

The Golf Society has continued to flourish under the guidance of Ken Knox and this year's captain, Paul Schofield and there was a record turnout of 52 at Malone Golf Club in June 21. The second outing is scheduled for Royal Belfast Golf club on September 10th 2021.

The Association has been proud to continue its support to the school in various projects. Over the past two years we have made a contribution towards the cost of a video tower for hockey at the Roughfort playing fields and the purchase of Electron Diffraction apparatus for use in the recently named James Stirling laboratory. Such financial contributions have been made possible through the Association's fund raising efforts through the Annual Dinner and other old boys' contributions.

There are several old boys who are worthy of mention since I took over the Presidency in April this year and I am sure everyone would like to join me in passing on our congratulations.

Professor Henry Halliday was the first person from Northern Ireland to be awarded the James Spence medal by The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. Henry and I played second row together in the 1970's for Academy Rugby Club.

Iain Henderson was selected for the British and Irish Lions and indeed had the honour in captaining the side against the Sharks in South Africa. This follows on from his captaincy of Ireland against France last February. He was also named Ulster Rugby Personality of the year.

Tom McKibbin has commenced his professional golf career and we wish him every success in the future.

As President I would like to express my thanks to all of the members of the Committee for their support and contribution. In particular the office bearers- Philip McKenna (Hon. Secretary), Nik Simon (Hon. Treasurer), James Cole (Membership Secretary) and Iain Knox (Dinner Secretary).

Finally, I would like to pay tribute again to Moore Dickson, my predecessor, on his year as President in 2019-20 leading the Association and representing it at various dinners and functions throughout the year with great skill and diplomacy. I would also like to thank him for his patience and leadership during the following 2020-21 Covid year. I also would like to congratulate Bobby Gray as Senior Vice President and Philip McKenna as Junior Vice President for this year.

Hopefully, we can all get back to some form of normality in the near future.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Trevor Sturgess', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Trevor Sturgess
BRA OBA President 2021-22

EVENTS & BRA OBA Website

Annual Dinner:	Saturday 27th November 2021 at The Europa Hotel. (7.30pm start) For table bookings and reservations contact Iain Knox via the Alumni office: email: alumni@belfastroyalacademy.net
Luncheon Club:	Lunches are held monthly. For further information contact Rob Fletcher: email: Robb Fletcher <braob.luncheon@gmail.com>
Business Breakfasts	Three or four events each year, providing informational, inspirational and networking opportunities for all alumni. Starts at 7:45 a.m. with a buffet breakfast at 8:00 a.m. There are two short presentations and the event ends before 9:00 a.m. Tickets are available through eventbrite.com.
London and Edinburgh FP Dinners	London: Friday 11 th March 2022 at the RAF Club, Piccadilly. Edinburgh: Friday 22 nd April 2022 at the New Club. If interested in attending this joint venue with the Old Girls, please contact Louis Campbell via email: < doc_malone2004@yahoo.co.uk >
BRA OBA Website	The revamped BRA OBA Website: please see www.braoba.com for event details, contact details, & a range of history & reference information.
Old Boys' Cricket Match	The Old Boys' vs BRA School cricket match is planned will for June 2022 at the Castle Grounds. For further information nearer the time contact Andrew Magee: email: andycmagee@hotmail.com
Golf Society	Captain's Day 2021: Fri. 10th September 2021 at Royal Belfast Golf Club. 2022: Picken Cup: Thursday 16 th June 2022 at Malone Golf Club &. Captain's Day: Friday 9th September 2022 at Royal Belfast Golf Club . Contact Ken Knox: email: ken@cd-group.com Telephone: 028 9034 1900.
Academy Cricket Club	Anyone wishing to join for the 2022 Season should contact Andrew Magee: email: andycmagee@hotmail.com Telephone: 078 9178 8515
Academy Rugby Club	Anyone wishing to join should contact: Colin Petrie: email: cjpetrie@sky.com Telephone: 075 1841 8620 Club lunches are held in the Clubhouse at HydePark before home league matches. For further information contact: Andrew Magee: email: andycmagee@hotmail.com Telephone: 078 9178 8515

Please note: It is important to keep members' contact information in the BRA Old Boys' database up to date. We would be grateful if you would email your name and school leaving year, or any changes, to the BRA Alumni manager at: alumni@belfastroyalacademy.net