



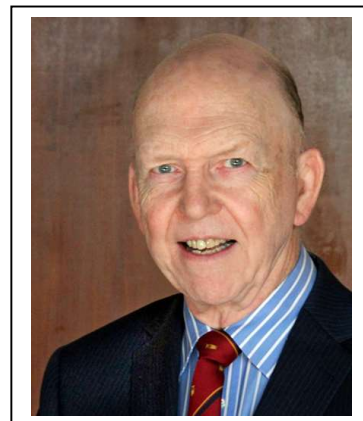
PRESIDENT'S LETTER 2023-2024

11<sup>th</sup> September 2023

Dear Member,

I am honoured to write to you as President of Belfast Royal Academy Old Boys' Association.

For anyone who does not know me, please let me introduce myself. I attended BRA from 1956 to 1968, starting with 2 years in Duncairn, then I went through Wingfield and into the 'Big School'. I enjoyed School, and also the physicality of playing rugby until, sadly, at 17 years of age, I was stopped from playing on medical grounds after being knocked out in a 1<sup>st</sup> XV Schools' Cup match and suffered the after effects from multiple concussions. I took an Honours Degree in Applied Mathematics and Computing at Queens, and worked in IT for 40 years consisting of: 3 years at Harland & Wolff, 2 at years UUI at Jordanstown, and 35 years for IBM Asia Pacific based in Sydney, Australia. I worked mostly as a Project Manager travelling a lot around SE Asia, which I found very challenging and rewarding.



**The Annual OBA Dinner is on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> November at the Belfast Hilton Hotel.** This is our major event, and I ask you to please consider planning a table with your friends. This event provides a wonderful opportunity to catch up with friends, get an update on the school, and join many others for a very enjoyable evening. You do not have to be a member of the Old Boys' Association to attend this event, and you are welcome to invite guests.

Our annual calendar also includes combined Old Boys' and Old Girls' Dinners in London and Edinburgh. **The London Dinner will be held in the RAF Club on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2024,** and the **Edinburgh Dinner will be held on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2024.** If you live near London or Edinburgh I hope that many of you will join us. Thank you to all our younger members who have attended these Dinners in recent years and who are now contributing so much to the vitality of the OBA.

There are 9 other McKennas in our family who attended or taught at BRA. Firstly, my older brother, Brian (1965) taught Mathematics his whole career at BRA and Brian's wife, Isobel, who taught Maths and Chemistry at BRA. Their 3 children, Robin (1990) and his wife Shirley (nee Scott, 1991), Alan (1993) and Colin (1995) also attended the grammar school. My cousin Terry's 3 children, Judith

(1978), Ian (1981) and Cathy (1983) also attended BRA. So I have no doubt that many people reading this letter will have played rugby with or against or were taught by, at least one of us!.

At the Academy I had many excellent teachers who inspired my interest in various subjects. Alfie Jamison (aka "Bronco") was my Form Master, Maths teacher in forms 1,2 & 3 and my rugby coach on the Medallion & 1<sup>st</sup> XV. It's fair to say that Bronco provided some discipline in the junior school (when I needed it) and was an inspiration on the rugby field. One happy memory from School is that we were the first BRA team to win the Medallion Shield outright. In that season we had 24 wins from 24 matches. That created a group of friends for life! Our coaches were Bronco & Davy Carruthers both of whom were key to that success.

I have been the OBA Hon. Secretary for the last 5 years and it has been a pleasure to work with Mrs Hilary Woods. I want to take this opportunity to thank Mrs Woods for her responsiveness and support during this time. Hilary's support is very important for the OBA and it is very much appreciated. In fact, I've been fortunate to benefit greatly from my experiences with the last six Principals of BRA and I'm very grateful to all of them.

Every year we lose a number of Old Boys of the Academy, and this year has been no exception. It is with great sadness that I record the passing of four Past Presidents: Professor Henry Halliday, Professor Robert McIlhagger, Albert Elliott and Robin Reid, all of whom made an enormous contribution to the Academy.

The primary objective of the OBA is to promote social interaction amongst Old Boys and maintain the links with BRA and the Old Girls. However, where the Old Boys' Association can raise funds through events such as the Annual Dinner in Belfast, special events and donations, we will make a financial contribution to School projects, with guidance from the Principal. This year's plans include a contribution to the new WW II Memorial, and to 'House Ties' for Form 1 boys beginning in September 2023.

The Old Boys' Golf Society continues to thrive under the guiding hand of Ken Knox and 42 golfers enjoyed the competition at Malone Golf Club in June where Ian Thompson won the Picken Cup with a score of 44 points.

The annual cricket match between an Old Boys' XI and the School 1<sup>st</sup> XI was played on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2023. Although the weather threatened at times, it was a another very pleasant day in the stunning surroundings of the Castle Grounds which always triggers many happy memories of past events.

**There have been many outstanding success stories already this year.** Please see the June Alumni Newsletter for more details. I would just like to highlight:

- **BAFTA: Congratulations to Peter Anderson** for winning the BAFTA Award for Titles & Graphic Identity.

- **Rugby: Congratulations to Iain Henderson & Tom Stewart** who were named in Ireland's Rugby World Cup 2023 initial squad. This honour comes after a very successful year with Ireland's Grand Slam winning endeavours as well as Tom breaking the URC's try scoring record and being named Heineken's Men's Player of the Year. Best Wishes to Iain Henderson in his 3<sup>rd</sup> Rugby World Cup.
- **Rugby: Congratulations to Tom Stewart for winning his first Irish cap** against Italy in August 2023.
- **Golf: Congratulations to Tom McKibbin for winning the Porsche European Open** – This was Tom's first win on the DP World Tour, and what a great title to start with! Now at 20, he can choose to play in any DP World Tour event.
- **Football: Congratulations to Callum Marshall** for scoring for the winning West Ham FA Youth Cup Team and playing for NI in a Euro 2024 Qualifying match.
- **Golf: Congratulations to Iain Knox and his team 5 Old Boys** for a clean sweep at the Ulster Public Schools' Golf Society Annual Competition. Iain Knox also organised a team to win the Molly Malone Cup vs Belvedere after a break of 15 years.

As President of the Association, I want to thank the members of the Committee for all their hard work and support. We are very fortunate to have this excellent team of Office Bearers. Thanks are due to Iain Knox for organising our Annual Dinner as well as to David Haslett and Louis Campbell for again ensuring the success of the London and Edinburgh Dinners. Also, thank you to Robb Fletcher and his team for organising our programme of monthly lunches in golf clubs around the Belfast area. These lunches are very popular and provide in a regular, informal format at great locations, opportunities to catch up with a variety of friends. Thank you to James Cole (Hon Secretary), Nik Simon (Hon. Treasurer), and Mark Cooper who manages our inventory. Thank you to Peter Barr who has greatly improved and maintained the news and other updates for our website. On a personal level I want to thank everyone who has given me a great deal of support and advice. Also, thank you to Bobby Gray for all the work he put into his tenure as President to make 2022-2023 a memorable year for the Association. Finally, congratulations to Iain Knox and Paul Scoffield on their election as Senior and Junior Vice-Presidents respectively, and I wish them every success in these positions. It is very reassuring to know the Association will be in such safe hands for the foreseeable future.

Please see the attached Appendix for dates and contacts information.

Yours sincerely,



Philip McKenna

BRA OBA President 2023-2024

<b>BRA OBA EVENTS &amp; Website</b>	
<b>Annual Dinner:</b>	<b>Saturday 25th November 2023 at The Belfast Hilton Hotel. (7.30pm)</b> For table bookings and reservations contact Iain Knox via the Alumni office: email: <a href="mailto:alumni@belfastroyalacademy.net">alumni@belfastroyalacademy.net</a> (Black tie)
Luncheon Club:	Lunches are held monthly. For further information contact Robb Fletcher: email: <b>Robb Fletcher</b> < <a href="mailto:braob.luncheon@gmail.com">braob.luncheon@gmail.com</a> >
Business Breakfasts	Three or four events each year, providing informational, inspirational and networking opportunities for all alumni. Starts at 8:00 a.m. with a buffet breakfast. There are two short presentations and the event ends before 9:00 a.m. Tickets are available through <b>eventbrite.com</b> .
London and Edinburgh Dinners – Open to all Former Pupils.	<b>London:</b> Friday 8 <sup>th</sup> March 2024 at the RAF Club, Piccadilly. <b>Edinburgh:</b> Friday 12 <sup>th</sup> April 2024 at the New Club. If you are interested in attending these combined Old Boys' and Old Girls' Dinners, please contact Louis Campbell via email: < <a href="mailto:doc_malone2004@yahoo.co.uk">doc_malone2004@yahoo.co.uk</a> >
BRA OBA Website	The BRA OBA Website: please see <a href="http://www.braoba.com">www.braoba.com</a> for event details, contact details, & a range of history & reference information.
Golf Society	2024: Picken Cup: Thursday 13 <sup>th</sup> June 2024 at Malone Golf Club & Captain's Day: Friday 13 <sup>th</sup> September 2024 at Royal Belfast Golf Club. Contact Ken Knox: at: < <a href="mailto:ken@cd-group.com">ken@cd-group.com</a> > Telephone: 028 9034 1900.
Cricket:	The annual BRA Old Boys' vs BRA School cricket match will be scheduled in June 2024 at the Castle Grounds.
Cliftonville Academy Cricket Club	Anyone wishing further information about the Cliftonville Academy Cricket Club should email <b>James Cole</b> : < <a href="mailto:jcole120@googlemail.com">jcole120@googlemail.com</a> >
Academy Rugby Club	Anyone wishing to join should contact: Gareth Davis: email: <b>Gareth Davis</b> < <a href="mailto:gareth.davis@rdavisandco.com">gareth.davis@rdavisandco.com</a> > Club lunches are held in the Clubhouse at Hyde Park before home league matches. For further information contact: Andrew Magee: email: <b>andycmagee@hotmail.com</b> Telephone: <b>078 9178 8515</b>
<b>BRA Gala Ball</b>	BRA Gala Ball scheduled for Saturday 27 <sup>th</sup> Apr 2024 in the Titanic Suite at Titanic Belfast. Four course gourmet dinner and dancing to The Liberals.

**Please note: It is important to keep members' contact information in the BRA Old Boys database up to date. Please go to the OBA Website "braoba.com" and submit the "Join Us Here" panel or email your name and school leaving year, or any changes, to the BRA Alumni Manager at: [alumni@belfastroyalacademy.net](mailto:alumni@belfastroyalacademy.net). Thank you very much.**