



## BELFAST ROYAL ACADEMY OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

### **PRESIDENT'S LETTER 2022-2023**

October 2022

Fellow members of B.R.A. O.B.A, my thanks for the honour of being elected President.

Firstly, many thanks to the previous two Presidents, Trevor Sturgess and Moore Dickson for the excellent work they did in difficult times. They kept this organisation running through the period of the Pandemic when we all had fun learning about 'Zoom' calls and the mute button! Thanks to Moore for staying for two years to see us through the covid period. Our major event – the Annual Dinner – successfully restarted last November, and all our functions are now up and running again. Thanks to Trevor & Moore for maintaining our relationships with other associations and attending a range of dinners representing this Association. So Trevor & Moore, well done. You have created a lasting impression.



My relationship with the school, which spans approx. 70 years, has helped form me as a person both in my work and social development. I started B.R.A. at the Prep. in Duncairn Church halls. We had some wonderful teachers who helped begin a love of learning which has lasted a lifetime. As I went through Wingfield and into the main school, the process continued. I also developed a love of sport, with cricket being the major influence and rugby as an extra delight. After school I played cricket at Q.U.B., Cliftonville and B.R.A.F.P. and was Captain of the F.P. in the mid-seventies. (One of my most pleasant memories in my school years was the presentation of a cricket bat for being the first schoolboy to score a century in a school match at the Castle Grounds!)

In the late seventies I moved to Bangor and became Vice-Principal and Principal in local schools. Only with hindsight do I recognise the great influence on what I wanted to achieve was the solid basis given to me by B.R.A. In 2002 I joined R.T.U. as a Leadership Development Officer and again found myself paying credit to my school career. This is why it is a true honour to be President of B.R.A Old Boys' Association.

Tribute must be paid to the school staff and pupils for coming through the trauma of the last few years with ever changing demands and rules to be met. That the school continues to thrive is a testament to the whole school body. The leadership and direction needs to be first class. The job of Principal is a balance of setting and maintaining standards. The job is a demanding one and in today's circumstances it requires special abilities which are clearly displayed by Mrs Woods. The support of all former pupils is essential to maintain our first class school.

There is a special relationship between the O.B.A. and the School, strengthened by our personal links. We should continue to provide support in financial terms and in joint work on the development of alumni records. A valuable method of giving financial support is the 1785 account which can allow every past pupil to donate to their desired level. I believe we should be promoting this whole heartedly while still showing allegiance to the aims of our Association as a means of continuing social interaction. We also need to continue improving the growth of younger elements in our activities.

The Association's major events are the dinners. Please see the appendix for details of dates and contact points.

If you would like to attend a dinner or one of the monthly lunches, you may find it easier to come as a group, or contact the organisers and see those attending you would know. The monthly luncheons, take place in local golf clubs (or the R.N. Yacht Club), and are an excellent opportunity to meet a range of friends. Please contact Robb Fletcher if you want to be added to the email mailing list.

An example of cooperation with the school took place on 24th June 2022 when a memorial plaque to AJW Chapman was unveiled on the pavilion at the Castle Grounds, during the Old Boys v the School 1st XI cricket match. This was a special occasion for all who benefitted from Alf's coaching and from his example of how a true sportsman should behave.

Ken Houston was asked to unveil the plaque. Ken, one of the School's most notable sportsmen who, although maybe better known as a rugby international, was Captain of Cricket in the late 1950s. Ken, and his wife Jean, travelled from their home in Scotland and delivered a fitting tribute to Mr Chapman after the unveiling. My thanks to everyone involved in organising this event – the planning involved Martin Blake, Graham Crothers and Chris Harte and Gary Ewing and Brian Stirling gave great assistance on the day. Andrew Magee helped organise the Old Boys' team, Brian Boyd umpired the match and Joanne Harvey provided invaluable assistance and included it in the Alumni News. Thanks as well to Michael Harte who was in charge of the School 1st XI .

An excellent video recounting the history of school cricket up to the 1970s, produced by Martin Blake and edited by Roly Jamison was shown on the day.

It was good to see the Cliftonville Academy Cricket Club playing in the top section of the cricket league and thus Senior Cricket being played at the Castle Grounds. Congratulations to the 2<sup>nd</sup> XI who won the Intermediate Cup.

Iain Henderson has had unfortunate injuries this year, but remains to play a major role in Ulster and Irish rugby plans.

Callum Marshall signed for West Ham and is part of their academy.

A successful Golf Society outing was held at Malone GC on 17<sup>th</sup> June, with 48 playing, which saw Mark Cooper win the Picken Cup. Also, 'well done' to Tony Black who had a hole in one. Organisation and course were first class.

Captains' Day was planned for Royal Belfast GC on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2022, but was cancelled in respect after the death of Queen Elizabeth.

Congratulations to Iain Knox and his team who won the Team Gross Prize at the Ulster Public Schools outing at Royal Belfast GC.

Tom McKibben is adapting well to the life of professional golf.

As President I would like to express my thanks to all of the members of the Committee for their support and hard work. In particular the office bearers - Philip McKenna (Hon. Secretary), Nik Simon (Hon. Treasurer), and James Cole (Membership Secretary). My thanks to Iain Knox (Annual Dinner), and David Haslett & Louis Campbell (London & Edinburgh Dinners) for their commitment & excellent organisational skills which make these events so successful. My thanks also to Peter Barr whose handling of news and other updates for the website has improved those aspects dramatically.

I also would like to congratulate Philip McKenna on his election as Senior Vice President.

I look forward to a successful year and the social interaction of the Association. If you have not been involved recently, please come back and enjoy it.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bobby Gray". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bobby Gray

BRA OBA President 2022-2023

<b>EVENTS &amp; BRA OBA Website</b>	
<b>Annual Dinner:</b>	<b>Saturday 26th November 2022 at The Europa Hotel. (7.30pm start)</b> For table bookings and reservations contact Iain Knox via the Alumni office: email: <a href="mailto:alumni@belfastroyalacademy.net">alumni@belfastroyalacademy.net</a>
Luncheon Club:	Lunches are held monthly. For further information contact Rob Fletcher: email: <b>Robb Fletcher</b> <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	<b>London:</b> Friday 10th March 2023 at the RAF Club, Piccadilly. <b>Edinburgh:</b> Friday 21st April 2023 at the New Club (to be confirmed). If interested in attending this joint venue with the Old Girls, please contact Louis Campbell via email: < <a href="mailto:doc_malone2004@yahoo.co.uk">doc_malone2004@yahoo.co.uk</a> >
BRA OBA Website	The revamped 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.
Old Boys' Cricket Match	The Old Boys' vs BRA School cricket match is planned for June 2023 at the Castle Grounds. For further information nearer the time contact Andrew Magee: email: andycmagee@hotmail.com
Golf Society	2023: Picken Cup: Thursday 15 <sup>th</sup> June 2023 at Malone Golf Club &. Captain's Day: Friday 8th September 2023 at Royal Belfast Golf Club . Contact Ken Knox: email: <a href="mailto:ken@cd-group.com">ken@cd-group.com</a> Telephone: 028 9034 1900.
Cliftonville/Academy Cricket Club	Anyone wishing to join for the 2023 Season should contact club. Find contacts online: <a href="http://cliftonvilleacademy.com">cliftonvilleacademy.com</a>
Academy Rugby Club	Anyone wishing to join should contact: Colin Petrie: email: <a href="mailto:cjpetrie@sky.com">cjpetrie@sky.com</a> 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](mailto:alumni@belfastroyalacademy.net)**