



Old Boys' Newsletter

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The President 2013 – 14

David Haslett attended Belfast Royal Academy between 1959 and 1966 and during his time at School was Head Boy and was captain of the 1st XV. On leaving Academy he went to Queen's University, Belfast where he studied Geography, graduating in 1969 and gaining a Diploma in Education in 1970. David spent his entire teaching career at Inst where, on retirement in 2007, he was the Head of the Geography Department.

David has maintained a strong link with the Academy since leaving School particularly through his family. His wife, Shirley (nee Simon), and their children, Rachel and Michael, all attended Ben Madigan and Belfast Royal Academy and Shirley also taught Physical Education at both schools throughout her career.

David has been a member of Academy RFC since 1970 and was recently President of the club. Well known in the rugby fraternity he has coached representatively at several levels in both Irish and Ulster rugby.



Welcome to the second edition of the Belfast Royal Academy Old Boys' Association Newsletter. This year's edition is again mainly comprised of articles written by Old Boys of differing vintages and I thank them for their contributions. For future editions, anyone wishing to make a contribution please contact Dr. Louis Campbell, c/o Belfast Royal Academy, Cliftonville Road, Belfast BT14 6JL.

I am also pleased that the Old Boys' Association Committee is able to send you the Belfast Royal Academy Newsletter. Hopefully this will help to keep members in touch with some of what is happening at the School and with the many achievements of pupils. In relation to the School it was gratifying that over 60 School leavers joined the Association this year and I hope that they gain much from their membership. Several events remain in my year of office notably the Annual Dinner on Saturday 30th November 2013. I very much look forward to welcoming members to the Dinner that evening and to other subsequent events.

John Shepherd: B.R.A. 1989 - 96

I really enjoyed my time at Belfast Royal Academy (and I knew even then that I wanted to be involved with cars. I quickly decided that if I wasn't able to drive a Formula 1 car for a living then I would have to design them! Fortunately, I enjoyed Mathematics and this meant that the obvious career path was to be an engineer. To this end, I chose Chemistry, Mathematics and Geography for A-Level. Thankfully, my results were good enough to secure me a position at the University of Bristol to read Engineering Mathematics. I chose this degree as I felt that it gave me the best opportunity to learn the skills that I would need in future. In 2000, at the end of my 4 years, I qualified with a 2.1 Masters degree and headed off into the 'real world'!

I then applied for a job with an automotive engineering consultancy called Ricardo. This was much more in line with what I had learnt at university and also involved cars! I spent 12 years with Ricardo and worked on many interesting and exciting projects. In 2003, I was sent to Germany on secondment for two years which was an amazing experience. During this time I learnt German, travelled throughout Europe and even went to the Arctic Circle to test drive cars on the frozen lakes. I also had many trips to Japan, spent time testing at altitude in the Spanish Sierra Nevada Mountains and gained a wealth of experience.

In September 2012, I started working at McLaren Electronic Systems. In this role, I was responsible for the satellite navigation system for the MP4-12C super-car and was lucky enough to spend much of my time actually driving it, including two weeks driving in Europe.

Whilst I enjoyed working on the infotainment system it was being involved in Formula 1 that I always dreamt of and so when a position came up in the engineering team I applied for it and was accepted.

McLaren Electronic Systems manufacture and develop the hardware and software for the ECU (Electronic Control Unit) which is effectively the 'brain' of the car. These units control all Formula 1, Indycar and Nascar cars. Each race series has its own hardware and software but all the teams of that series must use the same common ECU supplied by McLaren. My role involves writing and developing software for the Formula 1 teams.

I consider myself incredibly fortunate that I am doing something so exciting and dynamic and sometimes have to pinch myself when I think about what I currently do. I definitely couldn't have come this far without the support of my parents but an excellent education at Belfast Royal Academy has also had a major part to play. I think that it's very important to have a career in something that you are passionate about and I feel very proud of what I have achieved.



HARRY REA: B.R.A 1951-1964

I have very fond memories of my days at Belfast Royal Academy. Coming in after two talented brothers, John, 1st XV captain in 1960-61 and Richard, 1st XV captain in 1962-63, made life very comfortable for me. My passion for rugby and athletics was supported by some outstanding coaches and teachers – Arthur Thompson, George Spotswood, David Carruthers, Alfie Jamison, Ken Perrins and Harry “Taffy” Davies. I played in two Schools’ Cup finals: the first with my brother Richard in 1963, and the second in 1964, when I captained the side which drew 0 – 0 against Campbell College in a somewhat featureless final. This was due, in no small measure, to adverse pitch conditions, which were not conducive to playing attractive rugby, following days of torrential rain which had caused the final to be postponed for four days.

This final against Campbell has a 50th anniversary approaching. I still have the photograph taken by my aunts Dorothy and Muriel who ran the photography business Chas H. Halliday together with my mother Arline. The team was: W McConnell, R Heron, J Marks, H Rea, S Beamish, R Pollin, R Connolly, R Davies D Best, D Martin, H. Halliday (my cousin), D Haslett, J Millar, W Baird, D Johnston. Ian Clements was part of the squad but un-

fortunately sustained an injury and did not play in the Cup matches. The 1964 team was blessed with speed and skills but any comparison with modern school rugby ends there. I don’t think any of the front row would have been over 80 kg. Many of us honed our ball skills in Robert Pollin’s back yard and we spent hours there or at the Castle Grounds playing soccer. I remember playing school rugby on Saturday mornings and then Boys’ Brigade football on Saturday afternoons. Now the father of two sons, I realise this must have been very hard work for parents!

I have had endless joy from amateur sport and hope that the increasing professionalism will not spoil the amateur game. I also have had great joy from my family, friends and work, and I will always be grateful to B.R.A. for giving me such a terrific start. Rugby memories are mostly about people met and friends made, and I remember with affection the people in teams I played for: Edinburgh University; Scottish and British Universities; North of Ireland FC; Ulster; Ireland; London Irish; Montreal Irish; Quebec; Auckland University.



Australia and New Zealand 2013 - Mark Shields

I was fortunate enough to be invited to work for “Living with the Lions” on the 2013 Lions’ tour to Australia. The tour was, predictably, eventful and enjoyable with many highlights including the following:

A man had been involved in a largely good natured debate with a member of bar staff in Brisbane. This arose because the man was not allowed to smoke his cigar inside the bar but couldn’t take his pint outside, and thus unsuccessfully sought clarification on where he could do both. I wasn’t aware of this conversation and calmly walked outside the bar with my pint. The aforementioned man, in an attempt to continue the banter with the member of bar staff said loudly to me: ‘Excuse me Sir, you aren’t allowed to drink that pint outside.’

I was able to respond with: ‘Listen Zinzan, you used to be on my favourite rugby XV of all time, but after that comment I have just replaced you with Olivier Magne.’

Fortunately, given his frame, he took this well and I was able to have a long chat about his successful career as a back row forward who also, surprisingly, dropped goals.

Following the successful resolution of the first part of the trip, I travelled to New Zealand for four weeks. There I met with Kyle Dobbin (left 2001), who is working as an electrician in Christchurch, and former international Prof Harry Rea (left 1964) who is working in Middlemore Hospital in Auckland. Both spoke very fondly of their time at the School and were delighted by the recent capping of Iain Henderson and Stuart Olding.

Finally, in Old Boys’ news, two New Zealand gap students are coming to coach rugby and cricket for a year at the Academy from January. This arrangement, upon which we hope to develop, will result in the students playing Rugby and Cricket for the Academy teams. This will, I am confident, further raise the standing of both School and Old Boys’ sport.

David Middleton: B.R.A. 1988-1995

I can honestly say that I thoroughly enjoyed my time spent at BRA through my most formative years. The excellent guidance and quality of teaching by the staff there have served as a major stepping stone that has helped me to achieve the goals that I set out for myself in both my academic and professional life and has helped me get to where I am today.

Although I enjoyed every subject at school, it was in science where my interest truly lay. I found the sciences both fascinating and challenging in equal measure, and it was the knowledge and encouragement of my teachers in those subjects – Mrs Gray, Miss Mackintosh, Dr Scully and Mrs Terek – that fostered my ever-increasing enthusiasm, particularly for the physical sciences. In my case, of particular interest to me was Earth Science.

After leaving B.R.A., I read Geology at Queen's and Aberdeen. I was delighted to learn that within this scientific discipline (which to me was as much passion and a hobby as a career choice), there existed a wide range of opportunities in the fields of Mining, Environment Science, Engineering, Energy and more. Very quickly I realised what I wanted to do with my professional career - using my skills and enthusiasm for Geoscience to explore for new oil and gas deposits was my vocation.

After university, I took a position in Exploration New Ventures with Shell International, based out of their headquarters in The Hague in the Netherlands. My role there was to advise the company on where the most prospective areas for new hydrocarbon deposits were located on a global scale, and ultimately to draw the "X" on the map and indicate where to drill. However, with a single deep-water well often costing upwards of

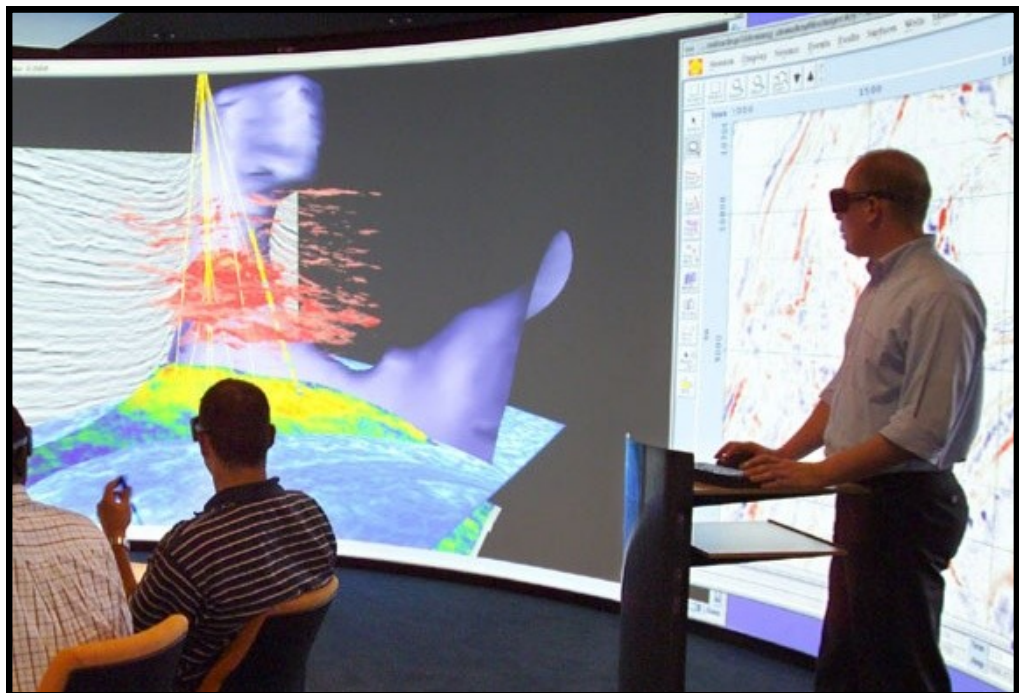
\$250 Million, one can imagine this is the very definition of a high-risk, high-reward business. I can't describe the thrill and apprehension one feels when a company as large as Shell makes a huge financial commitment of capital based largely on the recommendations of a young geologist from Carrickfergus!

My time at Shell took me all over the world, which I enjoyed immensely. In the oil exploration business, interpretation of truly state-of-the-art technologies such as 3-D seismic data, satellite imagery, earth's gravitational and magnetic field measurements and more are used. However, one inexpensive way to help understand the possibility of a giant oil accumulation deep in the subsurface is to study outcrops in the field. To this end, I spend a lot of time doing fieldwork in everything from the blizzards of the Canadian mountains, to the baking 50 degrees heat of the deep Sahara, and everything in between. It's a far cry from picking up rocks and fossils as a young B.R.A. student along the shores of Northern Ireland, but the basic techniques and scientific method remain the same.

Recently I took the position of Director of Petroleum Geoscience with the Canadian Government based in St. John's, Newfoundland, responsible, in part, for discovering new oil and gas deposits in this region. Who knows what natural resources lie beneath the surface here? Such is the nature of frontier exploration. Personally, I hope someday in the future skills such as mine may no longer be needed as other energy sources come to the fore. For now I enjoy the satisfaction of knowing that when people have Energy, even for something as simple as turning on the light switch, that I had a small part in that; if only a small part.



David (left) on geological fieldwork in the Atlas Mountains, Morocco



Selecting a drill location using modern 3-D geophysics technology

Iain Henderson and Stuart Olding the story so far.

Iain and Stuart both first played rugby in Ben Madigan when they were around eight years old; both having been encouraged by the on-field endeavours of their older brothers as well as their fathers who played for Academy teams in the 1970s. Rugby was something that they both immediately fell in love with, both the on-field physical activity and also the social aspect.

Iain and Stuart showed great promise at all levels of rugby, whilst also achieving academic excellence through the senior school. Much respected by their peers, Iain and Stuart could always be relied upon for assistance through school, both for sporting advice but also, especially in Iain's case, Mathematics advice. Iain was chosen to be a member of the Ulster Academy in 2011 with Stuart following in 2012. Stuart made his first appearance for Ulster vs. Leinster in December 2011. Iain then made his debut for Ulster as a replacement against Connacht in April 2012. Iain, to date, has gone on to win over twenty caps for Ulster and scored three tries, the first against Munster in his second game in May 2012. Stuart has scored four tries across his fifteen Ulster caps.

Their success has not been restricted solely to Ulster however, with both having already started what could be promising international careers. Both players represented Ireland teams whilst still at school and also at various levels through to the full international team. Iain represented Ireland U20 in Italy in the

Junior World Championship in 2011, before joining with Stuart again in summer 2012 for the Junior World Championship in Cape Town.

Iain won his first full Ireland cap against South Africa in November 2012. He has now won six caps, having represented the full international side in the recent tour to the USA and Canada. Stuart joined Iain on the Ireland team on the same tour, and won his first cap in the match against the USA. This was the first occasion that two former pupils from BRA played together in a full international match.

Iain and Stuart have a full schedule, combining training and studies; Iain reading for his degree in Mathematics at QUB and Stuart pursuing a Sport Science degree at UJJ. They both look forward to Old Boys' reunions, particularly the Old Boys' Dinner.

Both young players look back extremely fondly on their time at Academy. One of the highlights of their rugby at school was playing together in the Schools' Cup Final at Ravenhill in 2010. They are very appreciative of the guidance and coaching they received from all the rugby staff especially Chris McCarey at 1st XV level.

