



BALLYMENA ACADEMY NEWSLETTER

CARING FOR THE INDIVIDUAL, INSPIRING
LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT



WELCOME

Welcome to the first Ballymena Academy Newsletter, a publication designed to share good news and celebrate some of the many successes of our pupils. Read about the variety of opportunities on offer here in school and the life journeys our pupils go on when they leave. In all that we do, our aim is to inspire learning and achievement.



DANSKE BANK U16 CUP WINNERS

WRITTEN BY STEVIE BRISTOW - CAPTAIN

As we ran out from the changing rooms through the tunnel on to the iconic pitch at the Kingspan Stadium, the noise was like nothing any of us had experienced before. The turnout and support from the school was unbelievable, with their chants and songs giving us the boost of an extra player. We had tried to stay as calm and collected in the build-up to the game as we could in the circumstances, ready to play the same style of rugby that had carried us to the final. Receiving kick-off, we settled into our structure right away, building a number of phases of play before Robbie Coleman executed the first of many effective clearance kicks to take us up the pitch and calm some nerves.

After a number of phases of play in the opposition 22, Henry Casson won a penalty with a superb 'jackal', giving us the opportunity to pin Methody back. From there we worked closer and closer to the try line, first with a 20 metre maul and then patiently moving play from side to side until Sean Mckay's beautiful hard line picked a hole in Methody's defence with such precision, before stepping the fullback to complete a wonderful try. Mckay added the conversion to give us a 7-0 lead and the dream start.

Soon after McKays try, we were awarded a penalty and opted to take the scrum. The backs ran a move straight off the training ground that worked to perfection, as a gaping hole appeared for McKay to dot down under the posts for his second try. He once again added the conversion to establish a 14-0 lead. Another quick move from the backs a few minutes later, resulted in Michael McLean, in acres of space, securing our third try and leaving us 21-0 up at halftime.



Methody started strongly in the second half and after an early score their confidence soared. They were aggressive around the fringes, carrying hard and winning penalties at the breakdown. Methody continued to exert pressure with their half backs looking to kick to the corner at every opportunity. We were once again unable to hold off this sustained pressure, as Methody made their way over our line for a second time. The try was converted, bringing the score to 24-12.



In need of a spark to grab back control of the game, substitutes were made to give the team fresh legs and a burst of energy. With a reenergised front row on the pitch, we won a scrum against the head eventually resulting in a try from Joshua Harvey. When the final whistle was blown, pandemonium ensued as we celebrated on the pitch, with with the same ecstatic reaction from our magnificent support in the stands. We lifted the inaugural Ulster Schools' Under 16 Cup above our heads on the famous steps at the Kingspan, overjoyed with the feeling that we had accomplished the job we had set out to do, and that we would be bringing the trophy home to Ballymena.

DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARD

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme in school continues to grow each year with more and more pupils enrolling. In January pupils in Years 13 and 14 working towards their Gold Award, undertook a training camp on craft and navigation at Ardnavalley Scout Centre with Pathways Adventure Activities. On the same weekend, Year 12 pupils enjoyed training for their Bronze Award by learning about camp-craft, navigation, route planning and First Aid.



It has been fantastic to see so many of our pupils take part, developing skills not just for the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme but also for life!



BA FOUNDATION

The BA Foundation has been established to help Ballymena Academy to continue to offer the educational experience that previous generations benefited from and accepted as a given. We know that many former pupils of our school and their parents have fond memories of their time here and we hope our friends and alumni will support our efforts to keep providing an enriched education that is still free for everyone, regardless of background.

We want to reconnect with our past pupils, to enable them to connect with one another, to build the BA community and to promote and sustain the excellence of our school. We have held events during 2020 and 2021 in Belfast, London and Ballymena. Details of the following upcoming events can be found on the school's website - Networking Evening, Edinburgh 31/3/22; Networking Evening, Belfast 5/5/22. As we all settle down to enjoy the Guinness Six Nations one BA alumnus will be working at the heart of the event. We caught up with former pupil Charlie Simpson who now works for the Scottish Rugby Union.

ALUMNI IN FOCUS - CHARLIE SIMPSON

Dates at BA – 2003 to 2010

A Levels studies - Economics, French, Geography

Stand-out memory of school - Too many very happy memories to mention, but winning the Schools Cup 2010 is stand-out moment.

University(s) – Cardiff University

Degree(s) gained – B.Sc. Economics, Chartered Accountant.

Current Job – Scottish Rugby. It is a wide ranging and varied role that includes setting a strategic plan for the business, leading on corporate development projects and reviewing potential investment opportunities. I also work closely with the Scottish professional sides Edinburgh Rugby and Glasgow Warriors, on player recruitment.



WAYS TO GIVE...

✓ Give Your Year initiative

✓ Team playing kit

✓ Team warm-up kit

✓ Pitch-side advertising boards

✓ Drama/Music programmes

✓ Work Shadowing

WAYS TO CONNECT...

- 1** To find out more about the BA Foundation and how you can become involved click [here](#).
- 2** To find out how you or your business could support the school please email amckay847@ballymenaacademy.org.uk
- 3** You can also keep up to date with upcoming events on our social media channels: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).



BA Foundation

Help Us Maintain Excellence

PARENTS AND FRIENDS GROUP



Ballymena Academy Parents and Friends Group aims to be proactive in contributing to the day-to-day running of the school and therefore your support is essential to help enrich the educational experiences of our young people. Please keep an eye out for future correspondence regarding initiatives and information on how you can become involved in the Parents and Friends Group.

Upcoming events:

- Fundraising event in conjunction with Cancer Research Committee in school on Friday 25th March 2022
- Assistance with school events such as the Careers Convention and School Concert
- Uniform Recycling Scheme
- Book Scoop for the School Library

PAST PUPILS' ASSOCIATION

The P.P.A. are delighted to announce a number of events in the coming months. These events are open to past pupils, parents and friends of Ballymena Academy. We aim to raise additional funds for the school and support local charities, whilst allowing people to engage with the wider Ballymena Academy community. Wherever you are in the world, connect with us, renew old friendships and give back to the school that helped define you as the person you are today. The Association are delighted to welcome our President for 2022, Mr Harry Johnston, who assumed the role at our AGM earlier this month.

For more details on the events listed below please visit our Facebook page [@BallymenaAcademyPastPupils](https://www.facebook.com/BallymenaAcademyPastPupils)

- BA Table Quiz - Friday 4th March at Eaton Park
- Golf Society Competition at Galgorm Castle playing for the Swann-Hanna Cup, 10th April
- Summer Ball - Friday 6th May at Magheramorne Estate





CAROL SERVICE 2021

Written by Mrs E. Church - Head of Music

The annual retelling and resounding of carols, passed down across generations, which carry the age old message of 'Peace on Earth, Goodwill to Men', and the ancient but ever-new story of the Baby, born to live and die for us - because 'God so loved the World' - resonates with young and old alike.

And that is why, at the heart of it, a Ballymena Academy Christmas without a Carol Service would just seem very wrong indeed. Our school has always treasured our choirs singing carols and our instrumentalists heralding the Good News. In any normal year there is a frisson of expectation and excitement as we approach Christmas.

The choirs begin rehearsing Carols in September, and the Carol Services are special crowning moments to the year for all those involved and all those attending. Christmas, and our Christmas Music, are beacons of light and joy in the dark winter-world. How much more so, these past two Christmases, as we found ourselves in the grip of the Covid pandemic, when things were anything but normal, have we needed that light, hope and joy?

There was all the more reason to ensure that the music of Christmas continued. Nothing about that was easy. Restrictions on music and singing were particularly prohibitive, requiring all kinds of ingenious methods to enable rehearsal, learning of parts and recording performances, and all kinds of technical skills and digital software and hardware. Hours of preparation of guide tracks and recordings, audio mixing and creating videos ensued. In 2020, the whole service was virtual, a creative labour of love, involving many staff and professionals from Ballymena Academy and beyond, to bring together all the musical and technical aspects. The result was something very special.

In Autumn and Winter 2021, restrictions were still prohibitive, but the Carol Services were non-negotiable and the Music Department made plans and rolled out practices. Once again, on quiet Friday afternoons, carols echoed round the corridor from the voices of the Senior Choir. Practicalities around Covid mitigations meant that another new format had to be found. This time a hybrid service, where smaller groups could sing and play live with the proper distancing from each other and the congregation, but larger choral groups had to be filmed and shown as part of the service.

Things would also be different in that our usual venue, St. Patrick's Church of Ireland was undergoing building work. Fortunately, 1st Ballymena Presbyterian Church stepped into the breach, giving us a very warm welcome. The church provided so much help and support as we arranged filming and rehearsals, not to mention the congregational seating plans which required military precision (aided by the technical drawings by our own Mr Tom Heaney, 1st Ballymena's Clerk of Session). ArkMedia too, and past pupil Mr Brian Adams, gave their incredible technical expertise to the videography.

Chamber Choir, Senior Choir, Academy Chorale, Senior Boys Choir, Year 14 Choral Group, Senior String Ensemble, Trumpet Trio and Readers brought the message of Christmas in word, music and song. New arrangements of perennial favourites were heard from the choirs, such as: 'In the Bleak Mid-Winter', 'What Child is this?', 'We Three Kings', and 'Away in a Manger', alongside contemporary choral compositions including 'Cradle Hymn' and 'Welcome to Our World'. The Strings brought Christmas music from the Baroque, and the Brass presented Carol medleys.

After the services, as carollers and congregants made their way out into the December evening, we reflected again on all the things we had taken so much for granted before we had ever heard of such a thing as Coronavirus, and thankful that the message and meaning (and music) of Christmas never fade.