

THE BOYS' BRIGADE BELFAST BATTALION

HEADQUARTERS

Boys' Brigade House

14 May Street

BELFAST

BT1 4NR

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Ganaway Training & Activity Centre

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BELFAST

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Shepherd's Lodge Mountain Centre

Shan Slieve Drive

NEWCASTLE

BT33 0HN

Stedfast Supplies

14 May Street

BELFAST

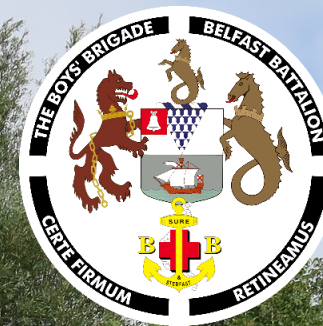
BT1 4NR

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# BELFAST BATTALION

*'Serving the Greater Belfast Area'*



## ANNUAL REVIEW

2020/2021



[www.BELFASTBB.ORG.UK](http://www.BELFASTBB.ORG.UK)

## ANNUAL REVIEW

2020/2021

## THE BOYS' BRIGADE

Patron: HM The Queen

### OBJECT

The advancement of Christ's Kingdom among Boys and the promotion of habits of Obedience, Reverence, Discipline, Self-respect and all that tends toward a true Christian Manliness.

### MOTTO

Sure & Stedfast (Hebrews 6 v 19)

### BELFAST BATTALION

**Hon President:** Alderman Jim Rodgers O.B.E.

**President:** Mr Clive Callender

**Vice-President:** Mr Billy Graham O.B.E.

**Chaplain:** Rev George McClelland

**Chief Executive:** Mr Paul McCarroll CF

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**LOCAL UNITS  
ACROSS BELFAST,  
LISBURN, NORTH  
DOWN &  
NEWTOWNABBEY**

In partnership with Churches, local units within The Belfast Battalion provide weekly activities for thousands of young people in a non-formal learning environment. We have a mission to care for and challenge young people and continue to have a strong presence across the Greater Belfast Area.

With the abrupt suspension of last year's BB Session due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, the suspension continued well into this year and therefore, our Annual Report may well lack the usual level of content that readers will have come accustomed as we report on the activities of the Battalion over the past twelve months.

It is true to say that we have endured much over the past twelve months. What was first considered as a short, sharp period of restriction to prevent our Health Service becoming overwhelmed back in Spring 2020 has now extended well beyond that and with restrictions still in place in some form or other, the way ahead is still not without a degree of uncertainty.

The contribution of front line workers was acknowledged through the National Clap throughout early Spring. Milestones in our Nation's history were altered accordingly with such examples being The VE Day 75 anniversary commemorations limited to safeguard people's health. Not forgetting the huge contribution by countless Community Groups through the provision of food parcels to those considered vulnerable. All of which was very encouraging to see that we have not lost our caring nature particularly for those placed in a vulnerable position due to COVID-19.

The announcement of the approval of a vaccination in December provides hope that there is a pathway out of this pandemic and the roll-out over subsequent months gives a glimmer of hope that a sense of normality may return once again.

But until such times, terms such as social-distancing, self-isolation, shielding and lockdown are now part of our vocabulary along with adaptability being a watchword, none more so than in Boys' Brigade. There may well be things that were done in the past that will no longer be done in the future and arising from the learning out of COVID, there will inevitably be improvements in how we once did those things and indeed, some new ways of doing some things that were perhaps not considered in the past.

The year under review has not been without hardship felt by those whose loved-ones have perished as a result of COVID and those that continue to suffer the effects of the pandemic. We also extended our sympathy to our Patron, Her Majesty The Queen, on the Passing of her Husband, His Royal Highness, The Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh.

## The Boys' Brigade BELFAST BATTALION

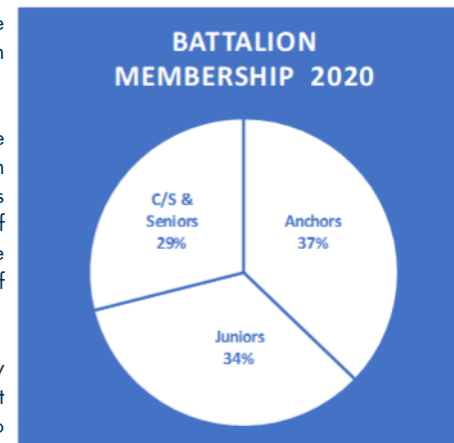
### Executive View

Like so much of society, the past twelve months have been difficult for The Boys' Brigade and, not least from our perspective, Belfast Battalion.

When we were plunged into lockdown owing to the emergence of the Coronavirus Global Pandemic in March 2020, little did we think some twelve months hence, we would still be experiencing the level of restrictions that were and are necessary to prevent the Health Service being overwhelmed by those in need of medical care owing to COVID-19.

Nevertheless, we have abided by the advice given by our Northern Ireland Executive and have adapted a lot of what we do so that we can continue to reach out to those young people within our ranks.

The normal programme of Battalion activity has been laid to one side and in respect of Battalion Executive meetings, these have largely been taking place over Zoom (a lifeline to us all but until March 2020 was not a regular feature in our personal lives). Battalion Executive along with the Finance and Property Committee, have used this time to review the operations of the Battalion with the former adopting the latter's recommendations that seeks to secure both the short-term and longer-term future of the Battalion.



# 900

**OFFICERS,  
LEADERS &  
HELPERS**

The main change has been the recent deployment of the Battalion Chief Executive to Northern Ireland District for the equivalent of two days per week to provide support to Companies, Churches and Leaders in their work among young people. This formalises the role of support to Battalion Companies that has been carried out over many years and will continue albeit through a closer working relationship with Northern Ireland District Colleagues. This should not detract from the Chief Executive's duties across all of the Battalion's operations.

Throughout the period of restriction, we have looked at what we can do rather than dwell on what we cannot and provided guidance, and indeed sought to give reassurance, to Companies and their Leaders as we treaded through uncertain times. Having had to change and adapt so much of what we do and how we can do it, there is an inevitability that such changes will continue and that further changes may be necessary as we move out of restrictions and adopt 'new norms'.

No matter what changes or new methodology we must adapt to deliver our programme to young people as we emerge from COVID, we must not lose sight of our over-arching objective - the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom.



During the past year a number of Battalion Companies reached significant milestones but owing to COVID restrictions, have either deferred their celebrations to another time or regrettably, have cancelled them. Nonetheless, we extend our congratulations for their great achievements and best wishes to those concerned.

When we look back on 2020/21, the Session was not without its most final of farewells to those who made a special contribution to The B.B. over so many years.

### Our Vision ...

... is that "children and young people experience life to the full".

This direct reference to John Chapter 10, verse 10, where Jesus says "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full", is the focus of all that we do as we lead children and young people to know Jesus for themselves and experience life to the full.



## Finance & Property

In recent years, the Finance & Property Committee has been steadily reviewing its policies in regard to continuity and disaster recovery along with a Register of Risk to place us in a good position in the unlikely event of a forced closure. Sadly, those plans have had to have been called upon. Like many in the world of commerce and not-for-profit, even the best of plans could not have prepared us for what was to come over the past twelve months. Our best laid plans are being tested at present in light of the current circumstances we find ourselves due to the global pandemic Coronavirus.

While the easing of some restrictions as outlined in the NI Executive's pathway to recovery over the next few months provide a glimmer of hope for the days ahead, the impact of the Coronavirus restrictions on the Battalion and its operations over the past twelve months will need some considerable time before we fully recover.

We are therefore working in uncertain times and to the tightest of margins with stringent management of our limited resources which, in reality, means that there is only so much that can be done until there is a greater relaxation of the present restrictions particularly in the world of generic youth work.

We are grateful to HM Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme that has allowed us to retain most of our Battalion staff but regrettably, even with this intervention, there is an obligation on the part of the Battalion to contribute towards staffing costs. Unfortunately this led to the reduction of a staff member at our May Street Headquarters in the Autumn of 2020.

Also like many, we have had to adapt our premises to be COVID compliant and to that end, it was pleasing to be awarded with Tourism NI's 'We're Good to Go' accreditation in respect of Ganaway Activity Centre.



This will go in some measure to reassure users of our facilities that we have made our premises COVID Ready allowing groups to book in confidence that they are visiting a COVID safe environment. However we are not complacent about this and we are continually striving to adhere to latest guidance and advice from the Department of Health and Public Safety in relation to COVID-19.

It will come as no surprise that the past year has been challenging, particularly with regard to the Battalion's finances. Annual fund-raising events like our Charity Golf Day and Door to Door Collection on behalf of Harmoni, were postponed and eventually cancelled owing to COVID-19 restrictions. With our Centres not in a position to welcome visitors, our BB Shop closed as it was deemed a non-essential retail outlet and a new funding structure from the Education Authority bringing an end to historical funding arrangements, the Battalion has had to adapt and adopt new methods of funding our operations not withstanding the use of our financial reserves to maintain our facilities and fund essential services during the period of forced closure.

We have used the time that COVID-19 presented to review our Battalion's operations and explore opportunities that will best place the Battalion as we all emerge from the Coronavirus restrictions.

A major change has been the deployment of the Battalion Chief Executive to the Northern Ireland District for the equivalent of two days per week, creating a closer working relationship with District Colleagues to continue engagement with Companies, Churches and providing support to Leaders in their work among young people. This deployment formalises the role that has been carried out for many years under historical funding arrangements. The review also acknowledged the reduction on face-to-face contact as more and more of our Leaders prefer to communicate through electronic means and social media. We will seek to utilise greater use of IT solutions for both the Battalion's activities and through Supplies. While reviews can appear to end some tried and tested practices, as we emerge from COVID we must take forward into the future the learning from our reaction to the crisis. This will allow the Battalion to continue to provide support in the post-COVID era using a different model of Battalion HQ operation from that pre-COVID.

A word used frequently over the past twelve months has been 'unprecedented'. The dictionary defines this as 'not known or done before'. The challenges we have faced over the past twelve months can only be summed-up as unprecedented as never before have we had to endure so much, nor have we had to react in the way we have done in order to be where we are today.

As we emerge from COVID and plan for the future, the challenges we face will require our utmost attention to secure what we have worked so hard to achieve especially as we are likely emerge from COVID a much leaner and more stream-lined version than that of twelve months ago.

We are so very grateful for the tangible financial support that we have received during the past year from Government

**The Maurice Williamson Boys' Brigade Heritage Museum**

Situated within a tranquil setting of The Boys' Brigade's Ganaway Training and Activity Centre in the Ards Peninsula between Millisle and Ballywalter, the Museum is open every Tuesday and Wednesday and at other times by appointment. The façade is designed to replicate the Charlotte Street Mission Hall, Donegal Pass Belfast, where The BB was formed in Ireland in 1888.

Among the array of BB artefacts and memorabilia, the gallery space features displays that depict significant times in the context of The BB since its formation and is open each September as part of the European Heritage Open Days.

The Boys' Brigade (Belfast Battalion) Boys' Brigade House  
14 May Street  
BELFAST BT1 4NR  
belfastbb.org.uk



Schemes to retain jobs, funds to cover inescapable costs and support for COVID-ready operations. We are so grateful to the professional expertise of the Battalion's Accountants, Diamond and Skillen especially over the past twelve months.

It is deep regret that we note the Passing of our friend and colleague, Mr Jack Hutcheson in July 2020. Jack had a long association with The Boys' Brigade and in particular, Belfast Battalion. Jack was Battalion President from 1986 - 1998, former Captain of 55th Belfast BB Company, former Battalion Treasurer and latterly Battalion Honorary Vice-President.

Jack applied his business acumen with great effect in so many ways on our Battalion operations and was instrumental in setting up Stedfast Supplies, as we know it today and the capital development of our lands at Belvoir Recreation Centre, becoming Vice-Chairman of the first Belvoir Recreation Centre Committee.

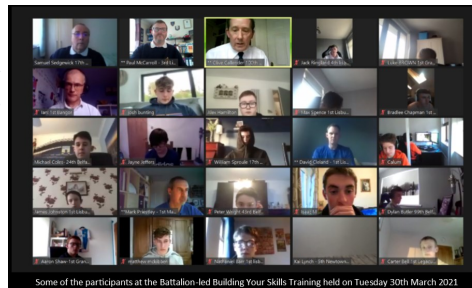
Jack held a great desire for our Battalion to be innovative and right up until his Passing, continued as an active member of our Battalion's Finance and Property Committee where his knowledge, wisdom and expertise were greatly appreciated.

## Training

In a normal BB year, training is provided to young people working towards The Boys' Brigade's Advanced Awards and to adult Leaders through Youth Leader Training and Captain's Element along with Camp Craft and Holiday Leadership. In addition to the mandatory modules of BB training and update to current and new programmes, courses such as first aid, working with Children and Young People with disabilities, IT and Social Media awareness add to the workload of the Training Committee's Programme of learning over the year. That's a normal BB year!!

Regrettably, owing to COVID, we have not been in a position our usual level of training activity and have had to adapt to a new way of delivery other than face-to-face. During the past year, 37 young people completed the essential element for President's Badge by attending a virtual Building Your Skills Course over Zoom in March 2021.

This was preceded in October 2020 by the first virtual course with the attendance of 13 young people completing Skills for Queen's Badge. As they embark on their journey towards completing The Brigade's Highest Award, The Queen's Badge Award, we wish them well.

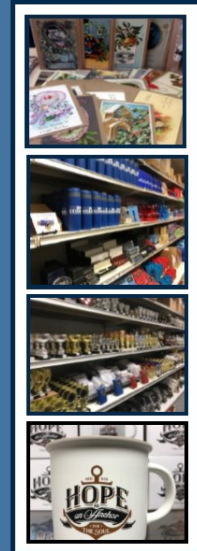


Some of the participants at the Battalion-led Building Your Skills Training held on Tuesday 30th March 2021

# The BB Shop in Northern Ireland

Open  
For  
Orders

Uniforms  
Badges  
Trophies  
Gifts  
Resource Packs



Check out  
[belfastbb.org.uk/stedfastsupplies](http://belfastbb.org.uk/stedfastsupplies)

We can take orders via  
[info@belfastbb.org.uk](mailto:info@belfastbb.org.uk)

We'll contact you to arrange delivery or collection



B.B. Cards

B.B. Leisure  
wear

B.B. College  
Style Scarf

Books

Gift Packs



## Anchor Boys



As we reach the end of another year of Boys' Brigade and Anchor Boys, we can truly say it has been a year like no other. We started the year approaching lockdown (and little did we know that this would be lockdown number one!) having to cancel the Anchor Boy fun day and various company displays and awards nights.

What we didn't know at the end of the session last year was that for many, The Boys' Brigade would not return in person at all during the year. During this time it has been difficult. Difficult not having fellowship with our other friends and Officers and especially difficult not being able to spend time to get alongside the Boys and talk to them face to face. As Christian Officers

we can be assured that God is always in control as Deuteronomy Ch31 verse 8 tells us "It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you. He will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed". As with the rollout of the vaccine we hope brighter days will arrive soon and therefore remember this promise in Isaiah Ch55 "As far as the heavens are higher than the earth so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts".

This year, of course, has meant no face to face competitions which whilst this has been understandable it has also been hugely disappointing for the Anchor Boy Committee that both the Potted Sports and Anchor Boy fun day could not go ahead. However many companies have been able to adapt to keeping in contact with the Boys. There have been companies who have delivered Christmas and Easter packs and many companies have made use of the great and free technology that we have widely available. BB has been held on Zoom online that has enabled interaction with the Boys and God's Word still being taught.

The BB at Home resources have been especially helpful and there has also been a time to enrol in some helpful online BB training.

As we hopefully look forward to face to face BB activities starting up why not take this opportunity to plan for the year ahead in the Anchor Boys. Can we come up with new ideas on how we can welcome all the Boys back with many having not been with us for a year now? How can we attract new Boys to us with many looking to get out more after having had all their activities cancelled? Why not try and plan what you would like to do on a monthly/weekly basis in regards to Bible stories, crafts and games.

As a Committee, we pray for God's hand of protection on all Boys and Officers over the summer months and look forward to hopefully resuming face to face activities at the start of the New BB Session.



#BBATHOME

## Junior Section

With Coronavirus restrictions leading to a cessation in face-to-face BB Activity, Sections have been creative in their programming. Competitions such as Musician of the Year, Bake Off, arts and craft have provided a varied programme of BB at Home. We commend those who participated in the various virtual Competitions and congratulate those who were placed within their various Sections.

Congratulations!		#expressyourself
<b>ANCHORS</b>	<b>JUNIORS</b>	<b>COMPANY SECTION</b>
Winner, Theo Blacklock 1st Lisburn	Winner, Matthew Wilson 6th Newtownards	Winner, Christopher Anderson 3rd Newtownards
Runner-Up, Oscar McColgan 6th Londonderry	Runner-Up, Patrick Hart 1st Hillsborough	Runner-Up, Lewis Doherty 1st Ballykelly
3rd Place, Michael Bullen 16th Newtownabbey	3rd Place, Lucas Yin 2nd Antrim	3rd Place, Jan Faulkner 1st Donaghcloney
	Highly Commended, Harry Lyod 2nd Comber	Highly Commended: Jonathan Allen, 2nd Lisburn Daniel Cruikshank, 2nd Ballymena Jason Hamilton, 1st Comber



### Camp but not as we know it!

Like many Companies within the Battalion, 4th Newtownabbey Junior Section had to cancel their Annual weekend residential at Ganaway in May 2020. But that didn't stop Boys enjoying their Camp At Home.



## Company Section

Like something out of Science Fiction:- A Contagious Disease which has claimed and is still claiming the lives of millions of People worldwide and leaving many with Long Term after-effects, is Sadly all TOO REAL.

The Government's response was to initiate a lockdown where everything would close - Schools; Shops; Churches and Travel would be restricted - our Lives would be 'put on hold'.

In BB, hopes of Parents' Nights, Outings, Camps, Competitions and Tournaments faded. The Pandemic swept over us like a Tsunami, washing away the end of the session and the following year.

Companies learned to adapt, introducing new ways of being in contact with their Boys. We had BB-at-Home instead of in the Church hall. Innovation brought on-line Bible Classes, Arts and Crafts, Theme Evenings, Quizzes and a regular "Verse for Today" Gospel meditation on the Battalion's WhatsApp and Facebook pages. We had virtual camps and virtual walking challenges and messages from Officers of



Instruction and Hope.

As a Committee we met four times throughout the year via 'Zoom'. Uncertain how long restrictions would last we prepared a Calendar of Events for 2020/21. We explored how we could hold some events on-line but sadly none could take place due to the nature of the Government's Restrictions.

We discussed how we could provide material to assist Companies on-line and to aid Boys' mental health. To that end, we organised a Special 'Zoom Meeting' on Wednesday 5th August for Captains and Officers which had 21 logging on and was described by some as a "Superb Night" and with a very positive feedback, proved worthwhile.

The Pandemic has, to some degree, swept away old ideas and established new thinking of how to provide the same service for Boys on-line and on-phone, while holding true to the Values and Standards which brought BB into existence in 1883.

Despite having to navigate turbulent waters during these 'difficult times' we still have... "an Anchor that keeps the Soul, Steadfast and Sure while the Billows roll, fastened to the Rock which cannot move, grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's Love".

It is good to remember that!

## Obituaries

Sam Currie  
Jack Hutcheson  
Norman Jackson

Vaughan Rosbotham BEM  
Jim Ross

## Thanks & Acknowledgements

Throughout what has been a challenging year, we are grateful to our Battalion staff at May Street, Stedfast Supplies, Ganaway Activity Centre and Belvoir Recreation Centre for their patience and understanding during this difficult time, along with our band of volunteers who oversee our Heritage Museum and those who have contributed in some way offering advice and guidance during these unprecedented times.



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