

Newsletter



We once again remind you of how quickly you should deal with the contents of our first Newsletter of the Session:

Needs immediate attention

Needs your early attention

Don't leave it too long

belfastbb.org.uk



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Belfast Battalion**

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Celebrating Juniors 100



Some 600 Junior Section Boys and Leaders from across Northern Ireland converged on Ganaway on Saturday 6th May for a super fun-filled day of activities, party games, fun at the fair and of course – birthday cake to celebrate 100 years since the formation of Boys Reserves and The Life Boys as the forerunners to the Section which is now known as Junior Section. The weather could not have been better and provided the perfect backdrop for all that was planned by Sharon Mackey and her team of NID

Junior Section Committee personnel, not forgetting those from our Battalion who helped out on the day. The Junior Section 100 Celebrations will continue until the end of December 2017 but this was the last and by far the best celebration event planned at Regional level. Sections may wish to celebrate in their own way and recipients of the recent B.B. Gazette will have seen the resources and ideas on how to organise your own Section's particular celebrations.



As we welcome you to the first Battalion Newsletter of the 2017/2018 B.B. Session, it is hoped that the content of our Newsletters will alert you to upcoming events, opportunities to extend your Company's weekly Programme and record the success and achievement of those made known to us. You will have noticed that your September envelope is somewhat lighter than usual. Following on from our successful practice last Session, we will no longer be sending out entry forms or registration forms as these are all now available to download from our Battalion website. Over recent years we have been striving to make greater use of our Battalion website, belfastbb.org.uk and have taken the huge step to have everything that you will need, by way of entry/registration forms for all events, available to

download. Just click on the Downloads Button on the front page and you will find all forms etc. listed.

But, don't panic if you do not have access to the internet via a computer, tablet or smart phone! If you need a particular form please contact us here in B.B. House and we'll happily provide you with the necessary forms that you require. We will still issue some items from time to time but it is hoped that everything you will need, to include ALL SECTIONS, will be available on-line. Our website will also have regular updates posted throughout the Session along with our Facebook pages and Twitter feeds.

Other plans for greater communication with B.B. Leaders are in the pipeline!

For your immediate attention we enclose ... (****)

Our President's Message for the year ahead
Your Battalion Calendar of Events (with more copies available on request so that you can give one to every Officer and N.C.O. in your Company)
A list of the changes, so that you can update your copy of the Battalion Handbook, as notified to us.
A new-look checklist to guide you through your preparations for the new Session.

Events Section

A Time to Remember and Dedicate (****)

We normally draw your attention to a special time at the outset of the Session when we join together at Ganaway on the last Sunday of September for our annual Drumhead Service of Acknowledgement and Commitment. In a change to our normal pattern this year, on the afternoon of Sunday 24th September you are invited to join with us as we remember a very special B.B. Colleague and former General Secretary, Mr Maurice Williamson M.B.E. During the special Memorial service, plaques will be unveiled by Maurice's family in recognition of his significant contribution to The Boys' Brigade and in particular, the Belfast Battalion. We will also be officially opening and naming The Maurice Williamson B.B. Heritage Museum. These Services are open to all of your staff, family members and friends. A special invitation is enclosed and is aimed at ALL Sections. WE ASK THAT YOU RSVP by FRIDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2017 SO THAT WE HAVE AN IDEA OF LIKELY NUMBERS THAT WILL BE IN ATTENDANCE.

TurningPoint

Youth Festival 2018 (****)

This ever popular event will take place from the Friday 27th to Sunday 29th April 2018 and will be held at our Ganaway Activity Centre. All the usual favourite activities as well as some exciting new ones will be on offer under the management of a new team leader.

If you find that attending the event for the full weekend doesn't suit, why not bring your Group along as day visitors on the Saturday and you can enjoy all the same activities as those staying for the weekend?

It would be great to see a strong turnout from Boys' and Girls' Brigade Companies at this year's event. An initial information leaflet has been included with this Newsletter for your information and don't forget to book your accommodation soon to avoid disappointment.

General Section

Institute for the Disabled (****)

Last year's Collection almost topped £11,000, a magnificent achievement by all those Companies whose Boys and Officers gave of their time in the cause of others but, there are a large number of Companies not participating in the 'Door to Door'. What will our total be if we have 100% participation from all of our Battalion Companies in this regard?! Those who were present at last year's Stricklands Conference will have heard from Mr Sam Humphries, the Institute's Director, how the money raised during the annual door to door collection adds value to all that they seek to do with a particular project looming on the horizon that would otherwise not come to fruition if it were not for the money you raise!

Details are enclosed for this year's House to House Collection and we would encourage ALL Companies to participate in some way.

Stedfast Supplies (***)

The enclosed poster for your Company Notice Board indicates that our B.B. Shop will be open from 9.30am – 5.00pm Monday to Friday and 9.30am to 1.00pm on Saturdays – 23rd September, 14th October 2017, 3rd March and 17th March 2018. We're even open on the St Patrick's Day Bank Holiday Monday!! Why not e-mail your order through in advance? Send your e-mail to belfast@boys-brigade.org.uk We'll make every reasonable effort to have your order ready for you to collect at a time convenient to you! We need ALL Companies to be supportive of Stedfast Supplies if we are to continue to guarantee the first class personal service that we have enjoyed over so many years.

Enrolment Services (***)

Please give consideration to devoting income from your Enrolment Service to our Battalion Charity Fund. What we can distribute from the Fund depends heavily on your response to this appeal.

The Stedfast Association for Northern Ireland (****)

will soon again be under way in the new Session and is open to all present and former members over 18 years old including Serving Officers. Celebrating 25 years since its formation, The Stedfast Association seeks to bring together those whom have served or are presently serving in The Boys' Brigade and all are invited to join. The Northern Ireland Stedfast Association meets bi-monthly in Immanuel Presbyterian Church Hall on the third Thursday of the September, November, January, March and May. An Annual Dinner is held each year which in 2018 will be held on Friday 2nd February at NewForge Country Club. Perhaps your Company could book a table! Contact names and addresses are contained in the Handbook. What a great way for former and present members to keep in touch with folk who share the same interest!

Online Brigade Manager (OBM)

This time last year we were alerting you to the Brigade's new online management system OBM. Many of you will have used this resource, some more extensively than others. As one Leader quoted "this will totally transform the way we work and take all the hassle out of administration". As with all systems, OBM will only be as good for you insofar as you will want and make use of it. It contains a host of features that will make your BB administration so much easier allowing users to deliver quick and easy record keeping, attendance registers, badge records and programme activities from a vast bank of Programme resources. There is also a function that will allow you to communicate directly with parents via e-mail and SMS. Further developments and improvements to existing features will emerge in the coming months so, it is worth your while to log on regularly to see what's new!

Around The Sections Anchor Boys & Junior Section

Officers in Charge will soon be receiving their new format Section specific circulars and we will use this portion of our Battalion Newsletter to highlight recent successes and achievements in all Sections. Please send us details of success and achievements for inclusion.

Company Section

Details are now available (****)

from our Battalion website for a number of Competitions and events planned for the new Session. Please enter by the required date so as not to disappoint your Boys when you are refused entry having missed the deadline!

Bible Class Syllabus

We have been most grateful to Ian Marshall of the 1st Bangor B.B. Company for his hard work in supplying us with excellent Bible Class material in recent years but regrettably, this year has been unable to facilitate us with such material due to family commitments. To assist you this Session, we are suggesting that Company Sections pick up a copy of a very useful FREE resource that is available from Northern Ireland Headquarters entitled TIME OUT WITH JOHN. Designed with young people in mind, this resource has been provided with support from a number of organisations under the auspices of The Bible Society for Northern Ireland and explores the Gospel of John in a fresh and innovative way. We have some copies available in B.B. House so first come first served!

Our Moon Walk (****)

will take place on Friday 20th October 2017. A form giving further details of this very popular event is available from our website and you are asked to pay special attention to the closing date for registration of Friday 13th October. We are told that late entries will not be accepted!

Is it a Fantasy or (****)

but for arm-chair enthusiasts or even Sections ready to take up the challenge, all can be part of our Fantasy Football League and details of the plans for '17 / '18 are available from our website.

Football Secretaries (****)

must be present at their annual meeting which this year will be held at 7.30 p.m. on Monday 18th September at Belvoir. It is very important that every Company either Junior Section or Company Section wishing to enter this Session's football events is represented on this evening to discuss and plan for the Season ahead.

Training Section

Extending your Programme! (****)

That's what's on offer at this year's Training Extravaganza. Organised by the Battalion's Training Committee for Wednesday 27 September in Bloomfield Presbyterian Church, attendees will have the opportunity to meet with and to hear from a number of external agencies who can offer their services to your Section providing you with something additional to your normal week-to-week Programme. Registration forms can be downloaded from the Battalion Website but we have taken the liberty of enclosing a form with this circular. Early registration is advised so as not to miss out!

Essential B.B. Training (****)

Details and registration forms for Skills for Queen's Badge and Officer Training (Youth Leader Training) are now available to download from our Battalion website. Details of the Building Your Skills Training requirement for President's Badge will be issued later but the dates and venues of these courses together with other training opportunities are contained within the Battalion Calendar of Events. With regard to Queen's Badge, please be mindful of the requirement of a 6 month period between Skills for Queen's Badge and the Queen's Badge Residential courses – if not to be embarrassed at a later stage! A quick reminder of the dates:

Skills for Queen's Badge (1) 13 – 15 October 2017 (Ganaway)
(2) 15 – 17 June 2018 (Ganaway)

Youth Leader Training Residential

26 – 28 January 2018 (Ganaway)

Queen's Badge Residential (1) 16 – 18 March 2018 (Ganaway)
(2) 15 – 17 June 2018 (Ganaway)

New Captains Training (****)

This year's Captain's Element Training, which is compulsory for all newly appointed Captains, will be held on Friday 13 – Saturday 14 October 2017 at Ganaway. Those concerned will have previously received their registration forms but further copies are available from the website.

Captain's Guidelines Booklet (***)

Trying to remember all the little (and not so little) items that have to be planned for in the coming Session? In addition to the guide through planning for the new session, the Captain's Guidelines Booklet, specially written by us for you, can be purchased in Stedfast Supplies here in May Street. Vaulting Gymnastics & Physical Activity (****)
Following on from previous successful training courses, plans are being finalised for this year's Course which will have an element of Physical Activity to be held over the week-end of 20 – 21 October '17 at Ganaway. Past participants have told us that this was a great way to learn new ideas and to share others.

Seniors' Weekend (***)

Our annual Senior Activity weekend at Ganaway over the weekend of Friday 9 – Sunday 11 February 2018 and is open to both BOYS AND GIRLS from B.B. and other youth groups. Alongside the planned activities that will include archery, zip-line, caving, high level ropes course, climbing, Seniors will experience so much more as together they meet with their like-minded peers and enjoy team-building skills, night activities to ensure that all who participate, experience a very enjoyable weekend. Boys working towards their President's Badge can also fulfil their residential experience and Building your Skills modules by their attendance at this weekend. Registration forms are available to download from the Battalion website.

Opportunities Section

Company Funds (***)

are never easy to raise and have to be constantly worked at particularly in today's harsh financial climate. One of the best ways to raise funds is B.B. Week and the material you need to make your efforts a success is available from Stedfast Supplies in B.B. House.

Battle of the

Somme World War I (***)

In this significant period of Remembrance, The Royal British Legion has produced some wonderful resource material which will be very helpful if you are planning to have your Boys take part in a WWI Project in the coming months. While they no longer post this direct to those who are registered with their Schools and Education Programme, you can avail of their educational resources by contacting: The Director of Corporate Communications, The Royal British Legion, Haig House, 199 Borough High Street, LONDON, SE1 1AA or hhill@britishlegion.org.uk

And don't forget about the special B.B. commemorative badge that can be awarded to Boys completing a B.B.-led Project on World War One up until the end of the 2017/18 Session. These can be purchased from your B.B. Shop here in May Street.

Coming Up

You Need To (****)

Give your early attention to the enclosed COMPANY QUESTIONNAIRE AND INVOICE FORM. To overlook these could result in elimination from Battalion and Group Competitions. Please remember that the figures are based on your Company strength for 2016/17 and NOT in the present Session.

You said and we've acted! This year, we have completed Page 5 of the Statistical Return for you based on the information provided with your 2016/17 Return. Should there be any amendments, please indicate these on Page 5. Further instructions are provided on the cover page of your COMPANY QUESTIONNAIRE AND INVOICE FORM. Please take a few minutes to complete the survey attached to your Statistical Return. Complied by the Company Section Committee, your response will greatly assist them to assist you with a wide and varied range of extra activities to extend your Company Section programme.

We would SPECIALLY DRAW YOUR ATTENTION to the fact that the Battalion registration of any Company which has not made its Battalion returns on time to B.B. House will be regarded as CANCELLED. This has serious implications for your church by way of Child Protection Legislation.

Don't forget

That if you are using any fun and recreational Centres etc. outside Boys' Brigade you should carry out your own RISK ASSESSMENT of the facilities. To assist you in this regard you should consider as essential reading The Boys' Brigade Safety Handbook which contains many items that require all our attention. The Handbook is available from Stedfast Supplies. We will continue to bring such facilities to your attention but it is up to you to judge what you see.

Don't forget if any Section is going away overnight notification must be provided to N.I.H.Q. to keep themselves right for insurance purposes. Parents consent forms are needed for activities at the Centres as they are for all Company Programmes.

Brigade Conference and Annual Council Meeting (*****)

Being held in Manchester over the weekend of 1 – 3 September 2017, this year's Conference and Brigade Council will be an important meeting with regard to the future of the National Organisation and its relationship with Regions and Battalions. We extend our best thanks to those who provided the Battalion with their Company's vote by proxy so that we can record our opposition against those Motions which we feel do not best serve The Boys' Brigade in Northern Ireland and in particular your Battalion. Please remember those who will travel from Belfast to Brigade Council in your prayers that discernment and wisdom will prevail by all whom attend Council so that, as an Organisation, we emerge clearer and stronger in Advancing Christ's Kingdom.

Don't Overlook (*****)

ENTRIES DUE BY

Friday 15 September	C.S. Tag Rugby Training fair
Friday 22 September	Senior Football & K.O. Cup Junior Football & K.O. Cup Volleyball League Coarse Fishing Captain's Element Skills for Queen's Badge (October Course)
Friday 6 October	Fantasy Football J/Sect Twin Peaks Challenge Vaulting & Gymnastics & Physical Activities
Friday 13 October	Moon Walk
Friday 3 November	Table Quiz

Congratulations

To **113th Belfast B.B.** Company celebrating 60 years and
To **25th Belfast B.B.** Company celebrating 95 years

Passed to Higher Service

Lady (Margaret) Thurso – anyone around B.B. during the eighties and early nineties will recall the name of Lord Thurso who was Brigade President from 1985 to 1993. Lady Margaret travelled extensively across the Brigade with Lord Thurso during his time as Brigade President. We received a lovely letter and handwritten postscript from the present Lord Thurso following our sending to him and his family our condolences.

Noel Hurst – 1st Bangor Presbyterian Church. A name that is perhaps not as familiar among B.B. circles but as an Officer with the Belfast Education and Library Board, Noel was instrumental in igniting the spark of the potential of Ganaway at a time when BELB was developing its Outdoor Education Programme as the embryo to the recent developments at our Ganaway Activity Centre over recent years.

A Personal Note from our Chief Executive

Many of you will be aware of the difficult circumstances that my family has been experiencing of late especially the illness of my eldest daughter, Sarah. During the summer months, Sarah underwent a stem cell transplant in St. James's Hospital Dublin requiring my wife Heather, youngest daughter Naomi and myself to relocate to Dublin for a considerable time as Sarah received her transplant. We are so very thankful that the procedure went as well as we could have expected but have a long way to go until full recovery. During the time that we were in Dublin, we were so very aware of everyone's thoughtfulness, practical support, good wishes and prayers together with those of the past several months. As we progress towards remission, I want to say how much we appreciate your understanding of late and ask that you continue to uphold us all, particularly Sarah, in your thoughts and prayers in the coming days.

E-mail sign up

To enable us to communicate more effectively with you, please send us up to-date e-mail address to belfast@boys-brigade.org.uk

The B.B. Object

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

