

The OBA: A Brief History



Bradford Grammar School

The beginning: 1886 to 1904

1886 – First Old Boys’ Reunion Dinner Two successful ‘soirées’ were arranged by past and present boys in 1885. Following these, William Claridge, a Mathematics master, offered to organise an Old Boys’ Dinner (BGS was then an all-boys school). This took place in January 1886 and preceded the formation of the Old Boys’ Association by 12 years.

1896 – Founding of the London Old Bradfordians’ Club
The founding of the London Old Bradfordians’ Club was originally proposed by A C R Carter in 1895, who was responsible for founding the Club.

The London Old Bradfordians’ Club was founded in 1896, and the first Dinner for Old Bradfordians resident in London was held in the same year.

1898 – Formation of the Old Boys’ Association

A Dinner was held on 30 April 1898 at the Great Northern Hotel (now the Victoria Hotel) in Bradford to discuss the formation of an Association of Old Boys’ of the Grammar School and the High School.

A committee was formed to organise and manage the membership and activities. The aims of the Association are still in force today:

“To promote good fellowship amongst the Old Boys (now Old Bradfordians) of Bradford Grammar School and to maintain their interest in the School.”

The first reference to the Association dates back to the list of Presidents at the first Annual Dinner held at the Great Northern Hotel in 1898.

Development: 1905 to 1912

1905 – Winners of silver golf challenge trophy – the Bacchus Cup
In 1905, membership stood at 220 and the Club was presented with a handsome silver golf challenge trophy by the President J B Bacchus. The competition is still going strong and held each year.

1911 – Smoking concert and Presentation to the OBA by Harry Behrens
1911 saw the membership rise to 450. BGS & BHS (Bradford High School) Old Boys’ Association had a smoking concert in March 1911 at the Royal Hotel, Bradford. The BHS and BGS later merged to become a single entity: BGS.

1912 – 250th anniversary of the Charter
The 250th anniversary of King Charles II’s granting of the Charter for Bradford Grammar School was celebrated in 1912. Members of the Old Boys’ Association together with Governors and pupils walked to the Service of Thanksgiving held at Bradford Parish Church (now Bradford Cathedral).



Our alumni are the greatest testament to the opportunities our School creates. Many continue to support the growth and success of BGS.

The War years and after

First World War – OBs in the armed forces
By the end of 1914, 280 Old Boys were serving in the armed forces. By mid-1915, the number had reached 410, and by 1917 the figure had risen to 910.

A total of 1,150 OB's served in different arms of the Forces during the First World War.

The school's War Memorial engraved with the names of 215 old scholars who lost their lives was presented by the Old Boys in 1920 at a cost of £600.

Second World War

In the 1939-45 War, the number of Old Boys serving in the Forces was 824, of which 115 fell whilst serving their country. Their names are recorded on the two stone plaques either side of the School's war memorial.

Annual Ball

The Annual Ball commenced in 1936 and the price of the ticket was 4/-. The Ball was held in a modified form during the war and was resumed in 1946.

In 1949 the Annual Ball was held for the first time in the Price Hall at BGS and was a great success for many years, featuring Victor Sylvester and his Ballroom Orchestra. This event continued until more recently when its popularity declined and the event was discontinued.

Bradford Grammar School pupils have gone on to achieve great things – Olympic champions Alistair and Jonny Brownlee, Team GB Performance Analyst Dr Deborah Sides, actress Georgie Henley, Chancellor of the Exchequer Denis Healey and artist David Hockney, to name a few – giving a glimpse of where BGS could take you.

Former pupils, known as Old Bradfordians, maintain close links with the School, returning for performances and reunions, sharing careers advice, and becoming mentors for our pupils.

Today's Association

The Old Bradfordians' Association today
Girls were first admitted to the Sixth Form in 1984. When the School became fully co-educational in 1999, the Old Boys' Association agreed to a name change and became the Old Bradfordians' Association.

Today, membership stands at around 6,000 Old Bradfordians who are scattered around the world.

Several "year group" reunions are held at the school each year as well as in America and Canada, and smaller gatherings take place in many other countries.

Attendance at the OBA Annual Dinner and Annual General Meeting continues to grow in strength. It is now held in September and usually attracts 150 to 200 members and guests.

Swimming and cricket matches at the school are annual features as is the Bacchus Cup Golf competition. Oxbridge Dinners are held each year, alternating between Oxford and Cambridge.

With thanks to OB John C. Hammond (BGS 1942-51)



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