

Newsletter



Banbridge Academy Former Pupils Association

Issue 1 2013-2014

Hello There!

Thank you for your interest in the newly launched Banbridge Academy Former Pupils Association and I do hope you enjoy reading about the latest news about the school and about the successes of our former pupils. It's good to have you in touch with us again.

We hope to establish an active association which not only gives former pupils an opportunity to stay in touch with one another, but also has strong links with the school and the local community. Building a successful and enjoyable association is something we aim to do over the coming months and years.

Once again, thank you and enjoy the newsletter.

BA former pupils now on the staff

A large number of us former pupils are now working at Banbridge Academy both on the teaching and non-teaching staff and are enjoying educating the young people here. You may remember some of the people in the photo, but may have changed since you last saw them! How many do you recognise?

*Back row (from left): Lynne Wilson (née Anderson, 1991-1993), Steven Dawson (1989-1996), Jamie Maguire (1995-2002), Fiona Topping (née Lawther, 1993-2000), Lee Shannon (1991-1998), Hilary Leatham (née Graham, 1978-1995).
Lynn McConkey (1988-1995), Helen Adair, Sarah Anderson (1999-2006)*

Front row (from left): Helen Cartmill (née Stronge, 1977-1984), Tim Acheson (1991-1999), Sally Johnston (née Moorhead, 1969-1973). Also pictured is current Principal Mr. Raymond Pollock.



Where are they now?

This little section is aimed at giving a more in depth look at one of our former pupils and to find out a little bit more about their life after they left Banbridge Academy. First up is local country and gospel singer songwriter Warren Smyth. Thank you, Warren for answering our questions.

1. What are you doing with yourself now? How did you come to end up doing that particular job? What is the best thing about it?

I'm a qualified Building Services Engineer working within the Construction Industry profession and I work as a Business Development Manager in the UK division of a large Scandinavian based company called Uponor, who are a leading international supplier of indoor climate and plumbing pipework system solutions for residential and commercial building sectors.

At school I followed the A-level science & maths subject route, which kept my options open until I could decide what particular field of engineering that I wanted to pursue as a career path.

The thing that I like about my current job is the varied aspect of my role, which mainly involves identifying & developing business relationships with key influencers and decision makers within the construction sector.

2. You have had an interesting musical career alongside your regular job, what have been some of the highlights for you?

Music has been a great blessing in my life and has offered me many wonderful opportunities aside from my normal day job routine.

After graduating from University and returning to NI, I got the opportunity to pursue Country Music as a possible career path and formed my own band for several years, which led to me recording a number of albums that received extensive airplay all over Ireland, UK, USA & Australia.

I've been privileged to perform on numerous stages and appear on various TV programs for BBC & UTV down through the years, but without a doubt the biggest highlight of my musical career to date was to be invited to perform on the hallowed stage of the world famous, Grand Ole Opry in Nashville

Tennessee in front of 4000 people during the Fan-Fair festival in June 2009. I got to duet with my good friend, George Hamilton IV and was introduced on stage by country music legend, Charlie Pride...what a journey from humble beginnings, singing Elvis songs in the back of the school bus to performing on stage at the home of Country Music...an unforgettable experience!

3. What years did you attend Banbridge Academy?

I spent 7 very enjoyable years at The Academy between 1982-1989 and I'm very proud to be associated with the school as a current Banbridge Academy Association Committee Member. I'm now married with 3 children, two of which attend the school... Kerri in year 13 and Matthew in year 11. My favourite aspect of school life was always playing sport and I was an active member of the school 1st XV rugby team, playing at wing forward position, coached by Mr Brian Livingstone and also the school badminton team coached by Mr Robert Cupples. These are sports that I still have a great passion for to this day and although I've hung my rugby boots up a few seasons ago now, I've coached mini-rugby at Banbridge RFC up until fairly recently, am an avid Ulster Rugby Fan who regularly contributes to the Ravenhill Roar and I still play a bit of competitive badminton and golf, which keeps me relatively fit, or aching as the case may be!

4. What are some of your favourite memories or do you remember something funny that happened? Would you do anything differently?

I have many happy memories of my time spent at the Academy. I just enjoyed school life to the full and especially the craic with some great friends down through the years, but a few stand-out moments have to include;

- Scoring a brace of tries for the 1st XV



rugby team against Foyle & Londonderry College in the 1st round of the Schools Cup Competition, which was my first match back playing after a year's recovery from a badly broken wrist injury sustained whilst playing in the previous year's 1st round of the competition against Ballyclare High School.

- Playing in the Ulster Schools Badminton Team Final with Tyrone Howe & Andrew Symington against the then Irish Champions, Coleraine Inst, where we got absolutely trounced 6-0 at the McCallum Hall in Belfast.

- Being selected as a school Prefect in my final year, which I still count as a great privilege to be recognised by fellow pupils and teachers to represent your school in an honourable role.

- My final year spring concert performance as Elvis is definitely a stand memory, as it kick-started an amazing musical journey for me down through the years.

Looking back at my time at the Academy, I honestly don't think I'd change anything about my school days...I'd easily say they were the happiest days of my life, with some great memories and it's great to see the school's excellent reputation and legacy continue into the next generation of school kids coming through its gates.

5. What advice would you give a young person who is going to the school now?

Obviously school life has changed quite a bit since I last attended over 25 years ago, but the basic principles still apply today...

- A good personal motto for life...try to treat people the way you'd want to be treated yourself...be respectful to others, especially your teachers and you'll be greatly rewarded...always try to smile, as it takes less effort than pulling a frown.

- Get involved in school extra-curricular activities, especially sport related, as it's a great way of gaining valuable social skills, team-work experience and recognition for your abilities, which in the eyes of future employers is invaluable.

- Don't let your friendships slip away, don't be quick to judge others, never hold grudges and don't ever seek revenge, as life's too short!

- Work hard as you're at school to learn all that you can...enjoy life to the full as you only get one crack at writing the script... school days can be the best days of your life, but it's up to you to make it happen

Warren Smyth's albums, including Teach Me to Dream are available to download on iTunes.

How do I get involved?

Our primary aim is to stay in touch with you and this newsletter is a great way to do that. If you wanted to become more involved in the Banbridge Academy Former Pupils Association, then we would really welcome your input. There are lots of ways to do this, including:

- serving on the Former Pupils committee
- offering careers advice and work placements to current students
- donations
- organisation of events for Former Pupils.

Don't forget to fill in the online form and leave your details on the Banbridge Academy website, within the Former Pupils section, if you haven't done so already.

Please e-mail Tim Acheson for more details, his e-mail address is timacheson@banbridgeacademy.org.uk.

Building a new Banbridge Academy for the 21st Century



The twenty first century saw another major phase of building work being undertaken. Once again a community of mobiles sprang up, this time on the hockey pitch beside the Lurgan Road. Phase One, opened in September 2010, included a new Dining Hall and Sports Hall, a new Science and Technology Centre, an Assembly Hall and purpose built Music and Drama Suites as well as a new on-site Astroturf hockey pitch

The renovation of existing buildings was completed in June 2011 and brought a new library, Sixth Form accommodation, improved ICT facilities and refurbished classrooms to the school. For perhaps the first time in the school's long and distinguished history, no temporary buildings exist on the site.

The recent refurbishment cost a total of £17 million pounds and now sees Banbridge Academy students enjoying some of the most modern and comfortable school buildings and facilities in the Province.