

Heritage

Newsletter of The Boys' Brigade Archives

Vol.4 No.8

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News from the Archives

Summer has ended, and we have all returned back from our holidays. A lot has happened over the summer break, and even whilst on holiday, our social media and virtual museum team have still been working away producing and distributing content.

2024 was the 100th anniversary of the dedication of the Belfast Battalions camp site on the 13th July 1924, we have been adding pages to the virtual museum about the dedication of Ganaway and Belfast Battalion Camps as well as an almost complete set of the Ganaway lyre. Details can be found on page 5, and a full account, together with the dedication programme can be found by visiting the virtual museum.



We have recently added a page in the virtual museum library containing posters and fliers. Fliers, or handbills, were a useful recruiting resource, and the BB Gazette of 1913 reports that BB Headquarters had supplied over 50'000 handbills to BB Companies to use for recruiting. The same Gazette also announced: *The Executive have prepared a handsome Coloured Poster, 20 x 30 inches, for advertising Demonstrations, Inspections, Concerts, etc. The Poster will be found useful at this season for announcing Lantern Lectures, Recruit Drills, and other preliminary meetings.*

We have included this poster (sergeant bearing colours) as well as some of the very early handbills in this virtual museum page. By 1916 a second poster featured the figure of a drummer was announced. We don't have an example of this poster, and if anyone has an example of the poster, or handbill which featured this design, please get in touch so that it can be scanned and shared on the virtual museum. We are continually adding content, so if you have any fliers, posters and handbills please contact us.

We have also added content on the virtual museum about awards credits from the 1980's with some terrific colour artwork as well as some content about the Belfast Battalion Consumer badge, further information on page 4

We are always keen to add BB specific content in the lead up to Remembrance Day on our Social media. If you have pictures or stories to share please contact us.



archive@boys-brigade.org.uk

Contact Us

Volunteer





Posters & Fliers

Tom Curr

Tom Curr artwork recruiting flier circa early 1930's. This is one of a series of 8 fliers which have been added to the virtual museum. Click on the link to view these and many more fliers and posters in the virtual museum library.



Virtual Museum

Thanks to the efforts of a couple of volunteers from Vodafone, the Battalions section of our virtual museum underwent a much-needed update in October. These pages now better capture the role of Battalions within the wider administrative structure of the Brigade.

Battalions, each uniting at least six Companies in an area, were established in the 1880s. These Battalions enable Officers to coordinate activities, share resources, and support smaller Companies, promoting unity and growth. **For more details, click on the link on the right.**

This refresh means we're now ready to expand this section of the virtual museum. To do this, we encourage you to contribute by sharing the history of your local Battalion.

Support and guidance will be provided by our Archivist, who will supplement your words with artifacts from the archives.

Together, we can continue to honour and document the local stories that make up the fabric of 'BB' history.

Boys' Brigade Battalions: The Early Years

During the 1885-86 session the first Battalions of The Boys' Brigade were formed in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Beith.

During the 1886-87 session three more Battalions were formed in Kilmarnock, Ayr, and Liverpool.

However, by the 1887-88 session, the Liverpool and Beith Battalions had ceased to exist, owing to the closure of the 3rd Company in each case. This led to a change to the minimum number of Companies necessary to form a Battalion increasing from three to six, to ensure the 'BB' was well-established before a Battalion Council is formed.

Battalion	Formed	Companies when formed	Total Battalion Strength at Formation*
Glasgow	1885-86	25	1,264
Edinburgh	1885-86	5	227
Beith**	1885-86	3	153
Kilmarnock	1886-87	3	191
Ayr	1886-87	3	128
Liverpool**	1886-87	3	158
Hartlepool	1887-88	3	154
Leith	1887-88	4	302
London	1887-88	12	562
Oxford	1887-88	3	103
Plymouth	1887-88	3	157

* Battalion strength is the total of Officers, NCOs, and Boys as recorded in the first appearance of the Battalion in the Annual Reports.

** Battalion closed during the 1887-88 Session.



Battalions



Virtual Museum

Credits

From 1st September 1983, a completely new badge scheme was introduced into the BB in the UK. The twenty-four proficiency badges were reduced to five groups, with a single badge awarded for each: Leadership, Adventure, Community, Interests and Physical. Credits, in the form of foil stickers were awarded to boys on the completion of the required period of training. When awarded they could be fixed in the appropriate page of the Boys' Handbook, or on the Boys' Wallchart, both of which were available from BB Supplies from late 1983 until 2008. To read more about the story of these awards, [click on the link or the right.](#)



Belfast Consumer Awards

In early 2020 the Consumer Council in Northern Ireland and The Boys' Brigade jointly developed a resource pack to help young people understand their consumer rights when they shop online or on the high street.

For the young person to receive their silver 'Consumer Champion' badge and certificate, they needed to complete the four activities in the silver award pack, and to receive the gold 'Consumer Champion' badge and certificate, they needed to complete the fifteen activities in the gold award pack.

The badges bore the name of the Belfast Battalion which was the principal promotor of the program. However, the awards program did not receive the uptake from BB Companies in the Belfast Battalion, possibly due to its launch coinciding with the Covid epidemic. By 2024 it was no longer being promoted and was no longer being actively used by BB Companies as part of their program.

To read more about the story of these awards, and view the handbooks which were issued to support the awards, [click on the link or the right.](#)



Credits

Consumer Award



Virtual Museum

Ganaway and Belfast Battalion Camps

Battalion Camps were inaugurated in 1904 and held annually thereafter until 1972. Prior to the acquisition of Ganaway the favourite camping sites in those early years were to be found at Millisle, Castlerock, Cairncastle and Ballyferris. Peak attendance was in the 1930's with over 1000 Boys' and Officers in Camp, following a break during the war, camps resumed, but attendance numbers never recovered, and by the early fifties, a new generation of Boys and Officers were looking farther afield to spend annual holidays. The Battalion Camp continued through into the early 1970's, with the final Camp being held in 1972. **More about the story of these camps can be found by clicking on the link on the right.**

Camp Lyre - From its early days the Belfast Battalion's annual Camp had its daily newsletter, 'The Camp Lyre' who's motto was 'tell the truth, the whole truth and anything but the truth'. The spoof format was popular and continued through to 1939. In 1914 the newsletter was called 'The Daily Screech', and it is unknown for how many years it was produced under this name, but in 1925, 'The Camp Lyre' returned with Volume 3.

Volume 14, produced at the 1936 Camp was the first to be called 'The Ganaway Lyre', and continued until the 1939, when a single issue was produced. We have added as many copies of the Camp Lyre to the virtual museum and these can be read by **clicking on the link on the right**. The collection is however not complete. If anyone has copies of the Belfast Lyre, or any other camp newsletters, please get in touch with us, as these provide an often humorous insight into camp life, and we would like to share these on our virtual museum.

Archive Shop

We still have a small stock of the Archive Trust Christmas cards featuring the artwork of Tom Curr. These are a great way to promote the activities of the Boys' Brigade Archive trust and the virtual museum. They are available in our online shop by clicking on the link on the right.

New stock is continually being added to the online shop. Please keep on checking the 'New' table on the online shop for the latest stock.

We are keen to add Company and Battalion anniversary badges to our online shop. Please get in touch if you know of any badges being produced so that we can purchase a supply for sale to our supporters.



Please note our shop will be closed between 10th December and 8th January



[Belfast Camps](#)

[Ganaway Dedication](#)

[Camp Lyre](#)

[Christmas Cards](#)

[Archive Shop](#)

