

**FEDERATION FOR ULSTER LOCAL STUDIES
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
STRABANE LIBRARY
SATURDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2015**

1. WELCOME

Pat McGuigan, Strabane History Society, welcomed everyone to Strabane. He gave a brief oversight into the history of Strabane and the connection to famous people such as John Dunlap, printer of the American Declaration of Independence, Thomas Woodrow Wilson, Flann O'Brien, Paul Brady and the formidable Hugo Duncan! He also congratulated the joint Federations on the Hidden Gems forgotten People Exhibit in Dublin and encouraged those present to have a look at the website.

2. MINUTES FROM 2014 AGM

The minutes of the 2014 AGM were reviewed and adopted. Proposed by Matt Herbison and seconded by Graham Mawhinney.

3. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies

4. SECRETARY'S REPORT AGM 2015

The Secretary, Bridgeen Rutherford, welcomed the delegates and guests to Strabane Library. Executive Committee Members elected at last year's AGM in Antrim were documented in the Trustees Report. Executive Committee meetings were held during the last year in Belfast Central Library, COFLA and Jury's Belfast. There was good attendance at the meetings.

Membership

Membership remained steady despite the increase in membership fee. There was a significant increase in individual membership which was to be welcomed.

Joint meetings with Federation of Local History Societies were held alternatively Belfast and Dublin. The meetings agree the joint programme for the incoming year and further ahead. The activities undertaken were:

April 2015 - Joint FULS/FLHS visit to Devon and Cornwall 12 – 16 April 2015

On the trip were fifty-one people, from 13 counties (four from Ulster), representing 22 Societies (5 from Ulster). The group visited Buckland Abbey where Drakes Drum is housed. The rest of the time was spent visiting Dartmoor, Princetown and Exeter Cathedral, Lanhydrock House, Truro Cathedral, St Michael's Mount, Prideaux Place and St Ives. A bus tour of Plymouth was thoroughly enjoyed by all. The group were given a very interesting talk by Chris Robinson, Historian on Plymouth past and present.

Federations Joint Trip to North Down, Ards and South Antrim 4 – 5 July 2015

Sixty-three historians from all over Ireland representing over twenty-five societies and fourteen counties met at the Somme Heritage Centre which proved to be a very informative and enlightening visit. Then on to Mount Stewart where lunch was most welcome. The sun shone and the group spent the afternoon wandering around the beautiful gardens, soaking up the sun and visiting the recently renovated house. It was then on to the Carrickfergus section of the visit. The

after-dinner talk was given by Shirin Murphy, Collections Access Officer with Carrickfergus Museum. On Sunday, the group visited Carrickfergus Castle, St Nicholas Church and the Flame Gasworks which is the only one of its kind still in Ireland.

The visitors were treated to an unexpected and unique experience in that the Tall Ships event was in Belfast on this weekend and the Red Arrows flew over Carrickfergus Castle.

Hidden Gems and Forgotten People

The *Hidden Gems and Forgotten People* project is one of the great achievements of the Joint Working Group. An Exhibition of the Project was launched in the National Library of Ireland on 8 October by the President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins. Larry Breen of the Federation of Local History Societies, who had organised the Exhibition, presented, on behalf of the both Federations the President a framed copy of a Forgotten Person, school master Willie Clune. Willie Clune had taught the President at the national school in Ballycar, Co. Clare, and inspired him on his later crusade for social justice for all.

The FULS Exhibition launch was scheduled to take place in January in Stormont.

May 2015 – FULS HOW-TO workshop

The Spring Seminar was held in Omagh on 16 May 2015. Over 30 members attended with Rose Mary Murphy a masterclass in how to set publicise, maintain and grow a Facebook page. Vicky Herbert and Linda Swindle, spoke on the planning, research, documentation and publication of the *Lisnaskea People and Places* project. Seamus Breslin described the trials and tribulations of researching his Templemore Great War Project on the subject of *Derry Nationalists and the Great War*. Pat Devlin dealt with some of the issues involved in Societies going through the processes of registering as a charity with the Charities Commission for NI.

Website

The FULS website, kept up to date by Pat Devlin, provides a very useful information source. Recently added was an Obituary section; the Speakers and Guides section has been updated; and Societies events can be posted. Links include Societies websites, information sources such as PRONI and Ulster Place Names, details about the decade of centenaries and the National Collection of NI Publications.

Due North

A further launch of Due North was taking place after the AGM today. Johnny Dooher had done an excellent job in putting the publication together and getting it published on time.

Conclusion

Bridgeen said that it has been an eventful year for the Federation. It was a struggle to retain Executive Committee membership. The support of members who may not be able to sit on the Executive Committee but would be willing to contribute as required was always welcome. The Federation was in a strong financial position but not to the extent that it would be in the position to employ administrative help. Bridgeen thanked the delegates for their patience and Johnny Dooher for his support and guidance over the last two years and looked forward to same with our incoming Chairman.

5. TREASURERS REPORT

Treasurer Bridie Bradley presented the Trustees' Report & Financial Statement. She took the meeting through the details of the Federation's income and expenditure as documented in the Report. Total income was £15,495; Expenditure £15,291; Income Over Expenditure; £204.

Public Liability Insurance was increased to £5 million for the current year. *Matt Herbison*, Antrim History Society, queried whether the insurance covered societies for voluntary and paid employees. This has been requested by some funding bodies when applications are being submitted. After some discussion, it was agreed that this issue would be taken forward by the incoming Executive Committee and an update given to societies when available.

The Treasurer's Report was adopted nem. con.

6. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Johnny Dooher presented his Chairman's report. The Federation had been in existence for 40 years and, although many of its originators were no longer with us, there were still some active in local research including Dr Brian Trainor and Dr Brian Turner. Similarly, there were many stalwarts in the local societies. He paid tribute to the many people in the local societies and libraries and those who in other ways made the work of the local history family so enjoyable. He thanked his colleagues on the Executive Committee, including the new members who were helping to foster a new sense of purpose. He made special mention of John Hulme whose work with the Federation of Local History Societies on the Hidden Gems and Forgotten People project which had culminated in a successful launch by the President in the National Library of Ireland in October. He thanked Bridgeen Rutherford, Bridie Bradley and Pat Devlin for their hard work and support.

The Chairman referred to the difficulty in communicating with the members of the local societies as not all societies passed on such communications directly. He spent some time in reviewing the Federations communication system and issues such as the role of *Due North* in providing an opportunity for local societies to contribute articles. He spoke about the role of the Newsletters, Email communications, and the website.

Concluding his report, Johnny urged people to be proud of their local group, to be proud of their local history, and to share it with others. "Go to seminars, bring in visiting speakers and encourage local research. People should be active members, seeking help and guidance and be prepared for new challenges".

Federation of Local History Societies

Richard Ryan, Chairman of the Federation of Local History Societies, said that he was delighted to have been invited to the AGM. He mentioned the large number of people from Ulster who had attended the launch of the Hidden Gems project in Dublin. Larry Breen gave notice of two joint events planned for 2016 -

1. Trip to the UK in April 2016 include Coventry, Chatsworth, Warwick, Stratford Upon Avon, Oxford.
2. A Battlefields trip in September 2015 staying in the Irish Institute in Leuven travelling through West Flanders and visiting the Somme, Waterloo, Ypres, Irish Peace Park at Messines. Assistance with funding was being sought from the reconciliation Fund and from some special MEP funding.

7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The following Officers and Executive Committee were declared elected as not more than the required number of candidates for each position had been nominated

Officers

Chairman: Patrick Devlin
Vice Chairman: John Hulme
Secretary: Bridgeen Rutherford
Treasurer: Bridie Bradley

Executive Committee

John Bradley
Aine Ni Duibhne
Florence Chambers
Patrick Greer
Doreen McBride
Patrick McGuigan

Incoming Chairman's remarks:

Taking over the Chair for the remainder of the meeting, Pat Devlin thanked Johnny for his support and guidance over the years. He was proud and delighted to have been selected. The committee was good team, hardworking and tolerant. He also looked forward to working with colleagues in the FLHS.

8. ELECTION OF PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENTS

The following resolution was proposed by Trevor Adams, seconded by Bridie Bradley, and passed unanimously.

"Pursuant of Article 62.2 of the Articles of Association, the Executive Committee recommends the appointments of Professor Ronnie Buchanan as President, Dr Brian Turner as Vice President and Dr Brian Trainor as Vice-President of the Federation".

9. SOCIETY REPORTS

Finny O'Sullivan, Lisburn Historical Society, reported on an Lisburn Society project to restore some of the memorials in the Cathedral. The city was famous for its linen industry and many of its families had been involved in its development including the Coulsons and the Crommelins. They received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and support of the City Council and rededication of the memorials took place recently.

Patrick Greer – West Belfast Historical Society, spoke about the co-operative effort of his society with the North and South Belfast societies, the Belfast Civic Trust and the Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society in seeking to protect the listed buildings in the City.

Pat McGuigan – Strabane History Society, said that they received funding from the District Council. The Strabane Society's big project this year involved research into WW1 and the local community. The project involved extensive research of local newspapers in relation to casualties, work on the ground, hospitals etc. The Society intend to produce an archive and/ or book.

Trevor Adams, Coleraine Historical Society, talked about the long term and continuing saga of the demand for a new local Museum, He hoped that with the influx of new young members that the quest might finally be successful.

Josie Herbison, Antrim Historical Society, told about two events in the last year that had proved inspirational. The local Council had invited two young people from Antrim Grammar school to accompany its own visit to the Somme. Later the Coleraine Society invited them to one of its meeting to recount their experiences. Their reports of the trip were remarkable and inspirational and one of them had found the grave of his great grandfather. Then a planned outing to the birthplace of United Irishman William Orr was joined at the last minute by several his descendants from overseas, thus making for a truly memorable event.

John Cunningham, Lisnaskea Historical Society, recalled a memorable evening outing for the Society. Their Chairman, a bit of a poet, was the last of islanders living on the islands of Lough Erne. The members joined him and some of the poet friends at the lake for a memorable evening of poetry and craic.

10. CONFERENCE CLOSE

This concluded the formal part of the AGM. The Chairman thanked the delegates and the visitors for their attendance and participation.

LAUNCH OF DUE NORTH

The 2015 Edition of Due North was launched by Richard Doherty who commented favourably on the wide variety of topics included in the magazine.

GUEST SPEAKER

This followed with Richard Doherty, who is a military historian and author of many books and publications on military matters. Speaking on the theme of WW1 Richard ranged over the entire history of the war, on land, sea and air, as it impacted on Ulster, its institutions and its people. The talk was very much enjoyed by all present and the Chairman thanked Richard for a thoroughly insightful, interesting and informative address. This was heartily endorsed by all present.

After lunch these was a walking tour of the historic village of Sion Mills which included a visit to the recently opened Sion Stables Museum.

Signed: _____ Chairman

Date: _____