



Federation

News-Letter

No 48 May 2019

New Member of the Executive Committee

James Armour resigned from the Executive Committee and was replaced by Robert Guthrie, Roe Valley Historical Society who was co-opted at the March meeting. Thanks to James and welcome to Robert.

New Federation Members

Two new members have joined the Federation - *The Friends of F.E. McWilliam Gallery and Studio* and *Roe Valley Ancestral Researchers* - welcome to both and we trust they will find their membership worthwhile.

Visit to Northumbria April 2019

The trip took place as planned with 13 FULS participants. It was, as usual, a success,

Joint FULS/FLHS Trip to Armagh - Saturday and Sunday 28 and 29 September 2019

The Federation and FLHS have arranged a joint trip in late September taking in historic sites in Armagh City including both Cathedrals, the Armagh County Museum and Navan Fort, including a reception and talk on the Saturday evening. There will be an opportunity for Federation members to stay overnight in the City Hotel and participate in the Navan Fort Visit next morning. More detail will be available nearer the time.

Ulster Local History Trust Seminar

The Seminar, planned for a date in October, will examine the *Irish Boundary Commission 1924-25*, set up to settle the border between the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland.

Due North

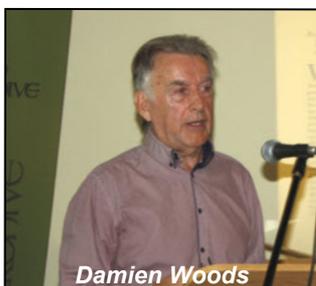
The Editor, Johnny Doohar, would welcome contributions for the 2019 edition to be published at the AGM. Articles to be sent to him at johndoohar@btinternet.com

Annual General Meeting 16 November 2019

The AGM will be held in the Ulster American Folk Park in Omagh on Saturday 16 November 2019 starting at 10.00 a.m. There will be more information in the next Newsletter.

Spring Seminar

Cardinal O Fiaich Library - 30 March 2019

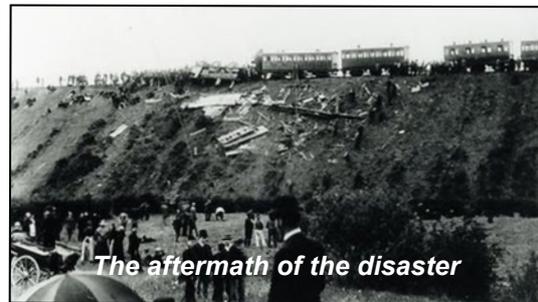


Damien Woods

Thirty people attended the seminar and feedback was very positive.

Damien Woods, Seanchais Ard Mhacha, gave a fascinating talk about the tragic Armagh rail disaster that happened on 12 June 1889 near Armagh, when a crowded Sunday school

excursion train had to negotiate a steep incline, was unable to complete the climb, and stalled. The disaster that followed, where 80 people, about a third of them children, lost their lives and 260 were injured, was an accident with



The aftermath of the disaster

m a n y causes, and comprised a combination of events and circumstances involving poor managemen

nt, stupidity, and organisational and regulatory issues that conspired to make it inevitable. Unbelievably, no one was found guilty of any crime though it did lead to parliamentary action to make rail travel safer throughout the whole of the UK.



Prof. Walker

Professor Brian Walker, Federation Vice-President, gave a wide ranging talk about the 1918 General Election after the end of the Great War and the first since 1910. He sketched the development of better understanding between the traditions over the century since then and went on to

describe the background to the election and the issues involved, including the question of widening the franchise. The new rules extended the vote to all males age 21 and over, (formerly only male householders), and women householders, or the wives of householders, aged 30 or other. The restriction for women was driven by the concern that, with the loss of male lives during the war, women might outnumber men on the register. Prof. Walker described the make up and rivalries in and between the political parties, with the rise in trade unionism and militant suffragism, and the rise of Sinn Fein. The outcome led to the demise of the Irish Parliamentary Party and the beginning of the process that led to the Government of Ireland Act and the creation of the 26 county Irish Free State and six county Northern Ireland.

Jonathan Gray, Killeshil and Clonaneese Historical Society, described the development and content of the Society's website. The aim, in addition to its local focus, was to reach the global audience of the descendants of emigrants from the 62 townlands whose population had dropped by over 40% between 1831 and 1871. It was also developed



Jonathan Gray

as a resource for the local area. He described the main features including a password-protected members' area, video and sound recordings of events and talks, payment of subscriptions on-line, local archives, church records, maps and databases and a news section. A very valuable resource to local historians and others. Altogether an excellent example of local initiative of great value locally and globally, and an inspiration to societies.

Josie Herbison, Antrim and District Historical Society, described *The Perfect Society* (tongue in cheek) and went on to outline the ideal qualities needed in society committees to improve their services and engage their membership. Among these are the ability to listen to and encourage participation, good planning, including contingency planning, good PR and engaging with neighbouring societies. She recounted a couple of stories of local initiative that had paid off, including, especially, a young man who attended one of their meetings and was so inspired that he spent the next eight years researching the Antrim involvement in WWI, producing a book *Antrim in the Trenches*, that listed the names of all the servicemen from Antrim and the surrounding district who had died in the conflict. A singular achievement.



Josie Herbison



Patrick Boner

Patrick Boner, County Donegal Historical Society gave an outline of the rich sources of information now available to local history researchers on-line - information that before the digital revolution resided in libraries, museums and depositories, often in forms difficult or impossible to access. This led to a rapid expansion of on-line sources, with more being added continuously. He illustrated his theme with a variety of sites dealing with historical, military, parliamentary, maritime and other categories of sources and provided examples of how a single issue or event could be investigated from a variety of angles by tapping into the different sources.

The final speaker, *James Kane*, O'Neill Country Historical Society, provided a well illustrated talk on the local impact of the devastating so-called Spanish Flu of 1918 -1919, the worst outbreak of disease in the history of the world. It killed more people in 11 months than died in the five years of the Great War. In Ireland over 20,000 died, over 7,500 of them in Ulster. In the world over 100 million



James Kane

died, 5% of the world's population. It infected over 800,000 people in Ireland, some 100,000 in Ulster. The virus was not identified until 1933. It spread like wildfire, in three waves June 1918 to May 1919. It is now thought that it originated in Kansas USA at an army camp close to extensive pig farms but there were other possible sources. In Ireland it was called *the Great Flu* or *An*

Tinneas Mór. The first wave, June to September was the least virulent. It spread through the rail network. Unlike previous flu epidemics it targeted the young and the fit and healthy adults. The second wave, October 1918 to January 2019, had a faster spread and was more severe. The final wave from February to May 1919, had a more gradual spread. The highest mortality were in three areas, Donegal, an area from South Armagh to Larne and the East Coast from Dublin to Wicklow. The hardest hit were institutions like arms barracks, hospitals, asylums, prisons and industrial schools. Many professions were badly affected such as health staff, postal workers, rail staff, factory workers, priests and Ministers of Religion, leading to disruption in many activities like markets, postal and rail services etc.



Flu victims quarantined in a Workhouse

All ranks in society were infected although the fatality rate was proportional to wealth and position in society, mainly due to the ability of some to pay for additional care. The high mortality rate led to the loosening of social, neighbourly and community bonds and a major fall in business activities, some taking many years to recover. Some tried to profit from the epidemic by promoting their products as cures including spirit distillers, soap makers, beef drinks etc. Much disruption occurred e.g. The General Election, sporting fixtures, markets, school closures, religious services.

Because of the momentous events unfolding at the time - the end of the war and the war of Irish Independence, the flu receded rapidly from active historical memory and interest was not revived until the 1970's.

Society Programmes: *The Federation's web site is a great way to publicise your Annual Programme. Just email the programme to info@fuls.org.uk or post to 18 Ardmore Avenue, Downpatrick, BT30 6JU.*

Facebook: *The Federation's Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/ulsterlocalstudies> - provides up-to-date information about Federation, society and other local and wider events through Ulster and the island of Ireland. Why not add your activities/views for information/discussion.*

Distributing the Newsletter: *We would be grateful if societies would circulate the Newsletter to their members, or at least to those on email.*