

The Federation for Ulster Local Studies Limited

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2008

Minutes of the Fifteenth Annual General Meeting of the Federation for Ulster Local Studies Limited held on Saturday 29th November 2008 in the Cardinal Tomas O’Fiaich Memorial Library, Armagh, at 10:30 pm.

A list of those in attendance is in Appendix 1.

Apologies were received from Dr W. Crawford, Dr Brian Turner, Doreen McBride, Helen Meehan, Abbey Historical Society and Brendan Cullen, Co. Kildare Historical Society

3. Minutes of AGM 2007

The Minutes were adopted on the proposal of Finny O’Sullivan, seconded by Roddy Hegarty.

Minutes of EGM December 2007

Doreen Corcoran asked if the paragraph renewing contact with ROI could be amended to read “renewing contact with the non Ulster provinces”. This was agreed.

The minutes were adopted on the proposal of Malcolm Duffey, Seconded by Sean Mullan.

Chairman’s Report (Johnny Doohar)

The despairing days of eighteen months ago seem a distant past and we can reflect on a number of achievements over the past year. There is a functioning administrative structure, a number of events have been successfully organised and Due North has been reactivated. Over ninety societies have affiliated to the Federation and the insurance scheme has been adopted by eighty-one societies. The accounts will show that the Federation is in the black and some money has been used in recent months to produce promotional leaflets on the Federation and develop display banners. Conferences, workshops and seminars clearly pay a big part and so also do publications. There was clearly a demand for the continuation of Due North as a vehicle to help provide wider access to local studies and we are grateful to those who contributed to the current issue and to the sub committee who worked to produce it. The other visible presence of the Federation is on the website. The Federation is fortunate in having strong support from other heritage bodies and we are deeply indebted to PRONI and to the O’Fiaich Library for making their premises available for meetings and for Seminars and Workshops. Following the same theme of widening horizons the Federation has re-established links with the Federation of Local History Societies in the Republic and is actively seeking to promote joint and shared activities. The Federation is making good progress on a number of fronts and could be said to be well re-established again. It would appear that it will have to be run in the foreseeable future as a voluntary organisation and this will present major challenges. Like many of us in this room we are an ageing people and an infusion of new blood is very necessary on a regular basis. This year the committee is asking you to approve the re-appointment of our President, Professor Ronnie Buchanan who has spent a lifetime in the interest of promoting heritage and history. And we have this year moved on to the positions of vice presidents where we ask your support in this acknowledgement for three founding members of the Federation. Doreen Corcoran, Bill Crawford and Brian Turner have given a lifetime of service to the cause and we can provide this acknowledgement of their years of service.

And on a more sombre note this year also saw the death of the first chairperson of the Federation in the person of Mairead Dunleavy from the Donegal Society and last year the death of another Federation stalwart in Cathal Dallat from the Glens society. May they rest in peace.

5. Secretary's Report (presented by Malcolm Duffey)

Following the AGM of the Federation in Armagh at the end of June 2007 the newly elected committee set out to develop a programme for the Federation for the following year. Two co-options were made at the first Executive Meeting when Roddy Hegarty and Finny O'Sullivan joined the committee. Belinda Mehaffy from Donegal withdrew from the committee in January. One disappointing event was the failure to appoint a secretary at the AGM and Liam Devlin agreed to act as minute secretary until a new appointment was made.

In total there were ten meetings of the Executive Committee and a number of subcommittee meetings to deal with specific items. A subcommittee was set up to organise the Seminar in Omagh in March, a subcommittee acted to help produce Due North and a further committee has met on a number of occasions with the Ulster Architectural Heritage Committee to plan a conference in the Glens of Antrim for the Spring of 2009. In addition a group from the Executive Committee met on a number of occasions with a similar group from the Federation of Local History societies in the Republic to help plan meetings and projects.

A proposed Conference in October in Strabane was postponed because of a poor response and it was decided to concentrate on a Seminar at Omagh on March 1" in the Library headquarters on the theme of **Landed Estates in Ulster**. This proved highly successful with over seventy participants and seemed to show that societies welcomed the opportunity to come together and help explore items of interest to their members. This was followed up by a Workshop session at PRONI on October 24th and once again a full house attended the event on the theme of **Family History and the Local Historian**, with an afternoon site visit to the famed Friars' Bush cemetery led by Dr Eamon Phoenix.

There was also an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Federation in December to revise the Articles of Association to allow for changes in voting procedures and in the timing of the AGM. Some further minor changes are proposed for this AGM and we would ask that these be viewed positively as efforts by the committee to further enhance the functioning of the Federation.

The decision was made to relaunch Due North and Roddy Hegarty agreed to take the lead in producing the journal with help from the chairman and Doreen McBride. This necessitated seeking out articles and ensuring that the journal could be produced by September at the latest. The launch was held in PRONI on Thurs. 4th September and once again members turned out to support the event. Trevor Parkhill from the Ulster Museum very kindly agreed to do the launch and spoke favourably about the Federation and the general relief at its continued success, following the withdrawal of funding last year.

One of the key objectives of the Federation is to provide contact between the member societies and this was an important aim of the committee. The FULS website is managed by Pat Devlin and used as a means of informing societies of what was happening in the world of local studies and how the executive was managing affairs. Regular Newsletters (7) were produced as a means of informing societies of what was happening and seeking support in Federation events. Pat Devlin has provided the opportunity for 3 member societies to be hosted on the Federation website with their own address and others are set to follow suit

Of equal importance were the increasing contacts with other bodies in the field of heritage provision and the support role of PRONI has already been touched on. The O'Fiaich library has been most supportive in provide a meeting room and contact with the Ulster Local History Trust allowed Federation members access to the celebrated Conference on the Plantations recently held in Monaghan. Another major area of contact has been the Federation of Local History Societies in the Republic and following from a number of committee meetings this led to the highly popular trip to

Tara and the Boyne in early September this year when up to 50 members from each Federation came together in a well planned visit. It is hoped to duplicate this visit next year with the Federation hosting the southern federation in a visit to Belfast.

One of the important needs of the Federation had been its ability to provide insurance to member societies at a very affordable rate and treasurer Pat Devlin has continued to build on that. For the year 2007-2008 the number of societies participating in the insurance scheme was 81 and this compares favourably with previous years. The extent of cover is deemed most adequate for society needs and continues to be a crucial element in forward planning. Membership is tied in closely with the insurance scheme and for they year 2007- 2008 a total of 95 societies were affiliated as full members with no associate members and a further 22 as individual members.

Planning and reviewing of activities is crucial in the developing of the Federation and this has been high on the agenda during the past year. A meeting with the DCAL committee of the Assembly in July allowed Johnny Dooher, Pat Devlin and Roddy Hegarty to highlight the work of the Federation and its contribution to preserving heritage. The minister's response suggested that in the immediate future the Federation can expect little in the way of financial help.

Contact continued with Cathal McManus of the QUB Open Learning Programme and it is hoped that these might lead to joint activities in the coming year. The planned seminar with the UAHC in the spring will hopefully lead to other joint activities and enable the Federation to provide further opportunities for local societies to enhance the study of their local heritage.

The Strategic Plan of the Federation is currently due for review and the outgoing executive committee has planned a day in mid January to review the plan and amend as necessary. Member societies might wish to join in the process by accessing the Strategic Plan on the website and making suggestions as to how they would like to see the Federation developing in the years ahead.

When it is remembered that the Federation is now entirely voluntary and that members of the executive are giving of their time and effort without recompense, in addition to the work that most do in their own societies, it is clear that they are owed a debt of gratitude for their commitment and effort. Meetings were well attended and members worked in the various sub committees to assist the work of the officers and ensure that Federation events were properly staffed and properly organised.

Doreen Corcoran proposed, Bridgeen Rutherford seconded: The Secretary's report was adopted

6. Financial Report and Accounts (Pat Devlin)

The period covered by the financial report was far from being an uneventful one, starting as it did in the middle of a crisis of confidence caused by the withdrawal of official funding and the redundancy of the Federation's staff. The former Executive Committee wanted to wind it up but societies rallied behind the rescue plan and this was avoided. The Federation was in effect abandoned by the state and left to fend for itself as best it could. There was no provision made to cover redundancy costs and had it not been for the rescue plan working as well as it did, the Federation would have been unable to meet its financial commitments.

Many of you will recall the emergency arrangements we had to make. These involved the establishment of a temporary Federation, with the same aims, to which Societies paid an annual subscription, and a contribution towards Public Liability Insurance. The temporary Federation renewed the Public Liability Insurance policy. The decision to close the Federation was reversed at an Extraordinary Meeting and a new Executive Committee was elected at the AGM in June. A meeting of the temporary Federation, also in June, agreed to wind itself up at a time to be agreed and its members and assets transferred to the 'real' Federation. To avoid difficulties with the Insurance Policy, it was decided to complete the wind-up at the end of the financial year, and this was done. Membership subscriptions that had been paid to the temporary Federation were treated as advance

payments to the 'real' Federation for the 2007-08 year, so Societies incurred no extra costs for the temporary arrangements.

For 12 months therefore we had two Federations, with a common membership. In reality however, they acted as one and the role of the temporary Federation was to support the real Federation. To reflect this reality I have provided you with two financial reports - the accounts of the Company, as deposited with the Companies Register in Belfast, and the Income and Expenditure Statement of the temporary Federation. To see the overall financial position therefore, they need to be considered together, although the 'official' position is that only the Company accounts need to be presented to the meeting.

The combined income was £17,300 and expenditure was £14,500. At the end of March the Federation, with all bills paid, had just over £4,000 in the Bank: not a bad result for the near bankrupt organisation of a year earlier.

The bulk of the expenditure, some 72%, went on clearing the carry-over of the previous years business: salary, income tax and national insurance, audit and the cost of a publication which had attracted grant from the Esmee Fairburn Foundation. With what was left the Executive Committee's priority was to get the Federation up and running as quickly as possible, within the limits of what was possible with the purely voluntary effort on its own part and that of the Societies themselves. As you will have heard from the Secretary's Report the Executive Committee has made substantial progress with this.

For the foreseeable future the Federation is going to have to live within the limits of what it can do with the resources available. This is not necessarily a bad thing in itself. The last few years of the 'old' Federation were dominated by the need to secure continuing official funding, and the money that was available was tied to the priorities of the money providers rather than those of the Federation. Now and for the future we are answerable only to the members and therefore able to concentrate on developing services that are useful to them. We want to simplify our procedures so that they help rather than hinder us. Last year we amended the Articles of Association and this year we continue this theme with a further set of proposed amendments what completes the process started then.

Our sources of income are

Firstly - the annual membership fee which has remained at £30 for many years, I don't know how many;

Second - public liability insurance fees that are levied according to the number of active members in societies;

Third - sales of publications, mainly Due North, when this is produced, and latterly CDs of earlier publications

Fourth - any surplus of income over expenditure relating to the Workshops and Seminars etc that we organise. This is usually very small since we always aim to keep costs and income equivalent.

Being a volunteer run organisation does not reduce the amount of work that has to be done to provide a decent level of services to the membership. Neither, apart from no longer having to meet salaries, do the costs associated with it.

The voluntary input involved in running the Federation is not costed but I can tell you that it is substantial. In terms of personal commitment such input cannot be sustained for very long and the Executive Committee will need to consider paid help. We will not be able to return to a fulltime employment situation in the foreseeable future but part-time contracted-for work may be a possibility. Whether this will require an increase in fees is too early to say.

We are trying to improve the revenue stream by exploiting the assets we have. One of our untapped assets is our archive of publications, mainly our journals – Ulster Local Studies and Due North.

One of the advantages of historical journals is that they are never out-of-date; they are not like yesterday's newspapers, or the currently fashionable novel.

The full run of 43 editions of Ulster Local Studies is now available on a single CD at a cost of £20. That's 50p per journal. The CD is fully indexed and is searchable by word or phrase. For multiple copies there is a 25% discount.

There were 23 editions of Ulster History Link, edited by Doreen Corcoran and printed between 1987 and 2000. These are available on a single CD price £5, or £4.00 for multiple copies. These provide a comprehensive account of what was going on in Societies and the Federation in those 13 years.

Although some copies of Due North are still to be found for the most part they are out of print. However, all eleven previous copies of the magazine are also now available on CD, price £10, or £7.50 for multiple orders.

These are valuable historical records and I hope that Societies will help to publicise their value and availability among their members. There are order forms available next door.

As well as improving the income stream, we are looking for ways to reduce costs, both in time and money. The cost of posting and the time spend in printing and enveloping material has been almost halved by the use of emails instead of letters. It is also much faster and encourages interaction – its easier and quicker to respond to an email than to a letter. So I would encourage Societies to switch to this form of communication where they can.

The Federations website is also a source of up-to-date information about what is happening and planned, as well as a repository of documents and reports. Details of Societies programmes and their publications can be posted there and many have taken advantage of this although only a minority so far.

Twenty-six Societies, at my last sweep, have their own websites. These are an important way, in the modern world, of reaching out to communities and establishing links with others in all parts of the world. Earlier this year the Executive Committee decided to offer Societies who presently have no web presence the chance to go on-line by providing a design and hosting service at a modest cost. So far three Societies have taken up the offer and are now on-line. Several others have expressed an interest. £35 gets you a domain name, a website that reflects your Society and an email address. An annual charge of £20 maintains the site and email service.

In conclusion I would say that the Federation is in a healthy state financially and the record of our activities over the period of the report shows that it remains vigorous and determined to press on with providing a good and improving service to our members.

The Financial report and Accounts were adopted on the proposal of Liam Devlin, seconded by Malcolm Duffey.

7. Amendments to the Articles of Association

Pat Devlin, moving the amendments, said that essentially, this was the completion of the root and branch review of the Articles that had begun in 2007 following the loss of central funding and the Federations regeneration as a purely volunteer administered structure. The first group of amendments, adopted at the EGM in November 2007, had been about defining the membership, changing the date of the AGM, executive committee tenure and nomination and executive committee processes. The proposed changes fell into six groups.

- 1 Specifying the role of individuals within the membership structure of the Federation

Articles 1, 25, 31 and 37

2. Clarifying the position of General Meetings

Articles 7 (Heading), 8, 16, 17 and 29

3. Clarifying the processes at General meetings

Article 12

- 4 Simplifying the nomination and election processes for officers and executive committee members

Articles 29, 30, 31, 34 and 37

5. Allowing for the Federation Accounts to be certified by an independent examiner in accordance with Article 257A of the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1986.

Articles 54, 55 and 59

6. Changes flowing from the other amendments and miscellaneous changes of wording and general tidying up.

Articles 1, 4, 14, 15, 18, 25, 29, 32, 36, 38.1, 38.2, 38.3, 39, 40, 44 and 53

He proposed acceptance of the changes. This was seconded by Robert Guthrie and the amendments were adopted

Sean McManus congratulated and thanked members of the committee for their work that they have done for the Association. Special tribute was paid to John Dooher and Pat Devlin that was given by a unanimous vote of all present.

8. Election of President and Vice-Presidents

Doreen Corcoran stated that she endorsed the re-election of Ronnie Buchanan as President of the Federation. She said that in his role as both scholar and teacher he had stimulated others and had always been a great friend of the Federation allowing them the use of premises in the Institute of Irish Studies and the issue of rent for this facility never arose.

On the proposal of Doreen Corcoran, seconded by Finny O'Sullivan, Ronnie Buchanan was elected President of the Federation.

John Dooher proposed the election of Doreen Corcoran, Brian Turner and Bill Crawford as Vice-Presidents in recognition of the work they have done for local studies over the years. This was seconded by Olive Campbell and carried unanimously.

9. Election of Officers and Committee

John Dooher then asked Doreen Corcoran to take the chair for the election of Officers and Committee. Nominations for officers had been received and validated. There was no opposition for the received nominations.

Officers:

Chairman	John Doohar, Strabane History Society
Vice-chair	Bridgeen Rutherford, Newbuildings & District Archaeological & Historical Society
Secretary	No nomination received. The Executive committee will consider the way forward.
Treasurer	Pat Devlin, Lecale Historical Society

Committee:

Mr Finny O'Sullivan	Killutagh Historical Society
Mr William Devlin	Trinity College Dublin Association NI
Mr Arthur Spears	Co Donegal Historical Society
Mrs Doreen McBride	Banbridge Historical Society
Mr John Hulme	Carrickfergus & District Historical Society
Mr Roddy Hegarty	North Belfast Historical Society
Mr Malcolm Duffey	Aughnacloy Truagh Historical Society

All the above were duly elected.

Doreen Corcoran congratulated all the members and wished them well in their endeavours. John Doohar asked if any Societies knew of someone who would be willing to act as secretary and if so to get in contact with the Executive Committee. 5 co-options to the committee are possible.

10. Report on Joint FULS/FLHS committee

Larry Breen gave a report on the success of the Joint FULS/FLHS Committee and the enthusiasm from both areas. He went on to tell everyone about the Tara Boyne visit where people from both Federations met up and the successful conference in Monaghan. Everyone agreed that this was a positive outcome, A further conference is planned for Belfast in Autumn 2009.

Hidden Gems and Forgotten People presentation took place. The project looks at both people and places that had either been forgotten about or had faded into obscurity. The aim is to develop this into a CD and a book with this being added to the website when completed. Societies are asked to submit articles etc as soon as possible. A newsletter will be sent out in the near future to all societies asking for submissions. It is hoped to finalise this before the end of 2009.

Individual Society updates on activities

The societies present gave examples of activities that had taken place within their own remit i.e. memorabilia evenings, bringing old photographs and discussing them, genealogy evening, Dungannon Forum with the Flight of the Earls and the Plantation theme.

Pat Devlin gave a PowerPoint presentation on some projects carried out by individual Societies

Abbey Historical Society: The restoration of the 'White House', originally a bawn and Newtownabbey's oldest building

Glenelly Historical Society's 'Field of Oats' project

Lecale Historical Society: Transcription of the 1901 Census for the Barony of Lecale which had been placed on the Society's web site.

Bridgeen Rutherford, NDAHS, told the group that there would be a dig for a souterrain, taking place in Newbuildings in June 2009 and all were welcome to attend and/or help.

11. Any other business

Roddy Hegarty asked that all attendees sign the visitors' book. John Dooher thanked everyone for attending and wished everyone a safe journey home.

APPENDIX 1

MEMBERS PRESENT

Neil McGlennon :	Armagh Diocesan Historical Society
Malcolm Duffy:	Aughnacloy & Truagh Historical Society
Margaret Livingstone:	Bronte Society- Irish Section
I. McAuley	
B. McAuley	
John Hulme	Carrickfergus and District Historical Society
Ruth McKenzie:	Cookstown Local History Group
R. Wylie	
M. Dingley	
Una Teague	
Finny O'Sullivan:	Killultagh Historical Society
Pat Devlin:	Lecale Historical Society
Olive Campbell:	Lisburn Historical Society
Vicky Herbert:	Lisnaskea Historical Society
Sean McManus:	Mourne Local Studies Group
Bridgeen Rutherford	Newbuildings & District Archaeological and Historical Society
M.J. Weir:	North Belfast Historical Society
Roddy Hegarty	
Margaret Cartwright	
F. Mayes:	Stewartstown & District Local History Group
Anne Laverty	
John Dooher:	Strabane History Society
William Devlin:	Trinity College Dublin Association NI
Doreen Corcoran:	Ulster History Circle
Frank Collins:	West Tyrone Historical Society
Mildred Moore	
Muriel Bell	

VISITORS

Larry Breen	NAAS Historical Society:
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