

FEDERATION FOR ULSTER LOCAL STUDIES

Minutes of 2014 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING held in Clotworthy House, Antrim on Saturday, 8 November 2014

Johnny Dooher, Chairman, welcomed everyone to the 2014 AGM. The minutes of 2013 AGM were shared with members. The following amendments were requested and accepted:

Jennifer Cunningham, Coleraine Historical Society:-

Page 6 Peggy Voles and Dan McLaughlin, Founder members.

Pat Devlin, on behalf of Roddy Hegarty, requested insertion of the DCAL Minister Carál Ní Chuilín.

Minutes were adopted with the above amendments proposed by Helen Rankin and seconded by Jennifer Cunningham.

SECRETARY'S REPORT – BRIDGEEN RUTHERFORD

I am pleased to present this year's secretary's report to you at Clotworthy House. I am sure you will agree this is a most interesting venue with the history of its gardens and the story of the Masserene family. It was chosen from a suggestion on the questionnaire completed by Societies last year.

The members elected at last year's AGM are clearly documented in the Statement of Accounts. Executive committee meetings were held at the following locations including Belfast Central Library, Jury's Hotel and the Europa Hotel, Belfast. As before, it has been difficult to encourage those new members nominated and elected at the last AGM to commit longterm.

FULS membership

Membership continues to remain steady but renewals can be slow. Membership fees have not increased for well over 10 years and in that time costs have increased substantially. This has now been reviewed and increased applied for renewal of membership this year. The plus side is that this will include of 5 free copies of Due North for member societies and 1 for individual members.

As noted last year, lack of participation in events continues to raise concerns. Suggestions to encourage members to participate in seminars and workshops are welcomed.

Divided Loyalties – May in Armagh

This seminar was held on 24 May 2014 in COFLA in Armagh. A full programme of excellent speakers examined a wide range of topics. The main speakers were Dr Peter Collins who reviewed the labour scene in Belfast, before, during and after the war. Dr Fergal McCloskey covered the Irish Volunteers in Co Tyrone from a local perspective. The attendance from FULS membership was disappointing in view of the exceptional knowledge of the speakers.

WW1 Seminar Dundalk

This was a joint WW1 seminar with FLHS held in Crowne Plaza in Dundalk on 11 October. Speakers included Professor Brian Walker of QUB, Pdraig Yeats, journalist and publicist. The seminar rounded off with a talk from Dr Des Murane on the song 'It's a long way to Tipperary' and finished off with a heartening rendition of said song. There was an excellent attendance at the seminar but again low response from FULS.

FEDERATION FOR ULSTER LOCAL STUDIES

FULS Speakers and Tour Guides

The Speakers Register has been updated along with the addition of more tour guides. This was one of the positive findings of last year's questionnaire in that it proved very helpful to societies in organising their programmes and outings. Please let us know of any that can be added to the Register.

Hidden Gems, Forgotten People (HGFP)

HGFP has also expanded over the last year. We now have a set of display panels comprising 20 each from both Federations. These will be available to Societies for use as exhibits in promoting this project or in promoting their own activities. The launch of the exhibitions will take place in Belfast and Dublin. Notification will be sent to members as soon as dates confirmed. Please take time to review the panels in the reception area. Any suggestions or questions please contact John Hulme.

Due North

A further edition of Due North is being launched today. Johnny Dooher welcomes articles and book reviews for consideration for publication in Due North. In order to make Due North as representative of Ulster Local Studies we need articles from your Societies and local areas. Societies can still buy copies and sell for a small profit.

People and Places project

This project completed this year. The participating societies were very enthusiastic but only half that started completed their projects. Due to the tight schedule and constraints of the funding body a substantial amount of funding was returned. Further projects of this type may be sourced in the future.

Community Relations Council

As part of the Decade of Centenaries the Community Relations Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund have been working together in "Remembering the Future". FULS have met with these bodies to explore opportunities to develop projects related to these anniversaries. This work will be ongoing and we will update you in our newsletters.

Conclusion

It has yet again been a difficult year for the Federation. We have had low numbers at committee meetings making it difficult to progress agenda items in a timely manner. Members can be co-opted at any time during the year. The majority of our communication is via e mail and newsletters. Please let us have an e mail address for you or your society as this is the quickest means of communication nowadays! We have have a Facebook page at www.facebook.com/ulsterlocalstudies.

**THIS IS YOUR FEDERATION AND YOUR FEDERATION
NEEDS YOU!!**

Proposed by Josie Herbison, Antrim Historical Society
Seconded by Helen Meehan, Donegal Historical Society

FEDERATION FOR ULSTER LOCAL STUDIES

TREASURERS REPORT – BRIDIE BRADLEY

Bridie Bradley presented her first Treasurer's report. She stated that Federation for Ulster Local Studies was now registered with the NI Charities Commission since 31/03/14. She took the meeting through the report.

She informed the group that Bridgeen Rutherford was named as Company Secretary with Principal office and Registered office at her home address. Trustees are documented in page 1.

The Company Accounts have been audited by the Independent Examiner and signed by the Company Secretary, Chairman and submitted to Companies House. Bridie pointed out that although there is a total balance £22,565 in funds but this would not be a healthy enough balance for investment purposes.

Proposed: Trevor Adams, Coleraine History Society

Seconded: Patrick Cross, Lecale and Downe History Society

CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS – JOHNNY DOOHER

Once again thanks to all who came along today – to our members, our officers and committee members and to our society representatives and to our special visitors.

A big thank you to those who helped make this AGM an opportunity to showcase some of the work of the Federation and its members

To Bridgeen Rutherford our secretary for her comprehensive report of the activities over the past year and for her role in helping keep the Federation a functioning and forward looking organisation and all this while suffering a major bereavement on the death of her father and struggling against minor ailments. Your constancy is much appreciated.

To Bridie Bradley, our treasurer, who has been finding her feet as Treasurer over the past few months; she was thrown in at the deep end last year and had to learn on the job. Her role is of course more than handling accounts. She has to ensure that member societies are properly affiliated and with membership and insurance premiums up to date. She deserves much credit for the immense amount of work that she has done and we are confident that she can play a crucial role in Federation activities in the year ahead. The accounts were as usual clear and accurate and to her goes much of the credit.

Pat Devlin as usual has been a tower of strength in communications with his Newsletters and his continued role in keeping the website up to date. He took on the task of contacting the membership about the AGM and kept us all right on when to have the forms out with members and collecting and collating the returns. Many thanks for all your work and it is highly valued and appreciated.

We can safely say that this meeting today is larger and more representative of the wider membership of the Federation than is usual and much of the credit for that has to go to our vice chairman, John Hulme. He took on the organisation of the AGM, along with his other duties on Hidden Gems and on seeking new speakers for the speaker list on the website, and his stamina and willingness to go the extra distance is remarkable for a man who only recently celebrated a significant birthday. He appears to have spent endless hours chasing up societies, arranging for the food and ensuring that everything ran as smoothly as possible and many of us probably have to be wary of over full email boxes – he appears to have spent a considerable time on the PC and the website is probably groaning under the weight of his missives. Much of the credit for today has to rest with John and he deserves our fullest thanks.

Other committee members like Aine, Roddy and David Cooke contributed to the meetings and helped in the organisation, with Roddy being centrally involved in the Spring Seminar on Divided Loyalties

FEDERATION FOR ULSTER LOCAL STUDIES

– Ulster and WW1 while Aine helped at committee meetings and in assisting John at the AGM preparations. We were unfortunate to lose Liam Devlin this year due to a recurring illness and David Cooke proved useful in the committee meetings in the first half of the year.

It is clear, however, that the Federation needs a stronger committee structure with wider involvement from our member societies and this was strongly stated in a letter addressed to all members in September. There has been some evidence of it having achieved some impact, with two new committee members coming forward for nomination and we need to build on this. A strong working committee is essential if the Federation Executive is to carry out an active programme for its members and provide the framework for future advances. Even at this stage societies can help. We would like to recruit additional members to the committee through co-option and anyone who is willing to come along and help share the load is very welcome; the message we want out there is that we need more members who are prepared to do a little to help a lot. Can you or your society help?

What does the Federation do for your society and for local history in general? Hopefully the secretary's report has helped to give you a clearer idea and your presence here will enable you to see more. There is no doubt that the Federation has shortcomings and the executive committee is aware of that. We would like to do more for our societies and to have them more widely involved in the whole heritage scene – meeting with others, helping develop their base support, providing assistance to ensure that they reach out to more people. We have a development programme that looks at many of those issues and attempts to address them. The plan is due for review in the coming months and you could help in that review by suggesting areas where you would like to see initiatives. Watch out for the next Newsletter when your views will be canvassed and ensure a response from your society.

We ran two seminars this year, one on historical commemoration at Armagh under the title Divided Loyalties and there were 5 excellent presentations on how the WW1 period impacted on Ulster. Those who were there felt it was an excellent introduction to the period and provided great exemplars that local societies might adopt in their own areas on studying this period. Then there was the joint seminar with the southern Federation at Dundalk in October when 'Hidden Histories' looked at how WW1 impacted on different parts of Ireland. Again five excellent addresses followed by question and answer sessions provided much clarity on aspects of the period 1912 -23 and it is hoped to do a summary of these talks for distribution to the member societies of both Federations. The attendance at Dundalk was very good – over 60 people there but – how many of our Ulster societies were represented. The answer is too few, just as happened at the May event at Armagh. So what is wrong? We know the content is good, the speakers are first class, the response from those present is excellent but why so few? Location can be used as an explanation but we know that many people travelled long distances to be present at the events so why not your society. We feel that there should be further explorations of this crucial period of War and Revolution and would be only too happy to organise these. But not if there are only a few people to benefit. Tell us where we are going wrong.

It seems that in the whole area of communication and interaction that we are not making contact with our members. The main points for meeting up and sharing ideas are at these gatherings but not enough come along so little contact is made. We are suggesting that members of societies could be directly contacted by the Federation executive about forthcoming events if they would provide us with an email address or even a mobile phone number. Should we move more widely to Facebook , Twitter or some such communication system? We want to hear from you and be able to contact you so help us please.

Some of our recent programmes are working very well and John Hulme and Pat Devlin have done sterling work with the Hidden Gems programme. Hopefully after Christmas samples of these will go on tour of local libraries to help enthuse others to contribute. The list of speakers and topics on the speakers Register is expanding rapidly and your continued feedback will be vitally important in this scheme; let us know what worked well in your society and whether some speakers might be better to ply their trade elsewhere.

FEDERATION FOR ULSTER LOCAL STUDIES

Over a long number of years we have developed a strong bond with the Federation of Local History Societies in the non-Ulster part of Ireland and the joint seminars, the shared visits and the overseas travel are now part of the annual programmes. This past year there was an exciting trip to Scotland and those who participated found it very stimulating just as they had found the previous year's visits to Bath, to York and to Belgium most interesting. Next year the venue is selected as Devon/Cornwall and no doubt the numbers wanting to go will meet the target. Larry Breen is the constant figure in all these events and he is to be thanked and congratulated for his role in ensuring that both Federations enjoy such a close relationship. He is currently holidaying in Australia and is probably thinking of how he is missing our AGM at this moment. But we have a very capable deputy in Richard and his wife Helen and we pass on our greetings through them to our many friends down South.

Let us now continue with the business part of our meeting and we can then look forward to a stimulating talk and a relaxing lunch. And do not feel shy about airing your view – that is what AGMs are for.

Mr Richard Ryan, Federation for Local History Societies, took the chair to complete the election of officers and executive committee members. Richard thanked FULS for the invitation and said he was delighted to be in Antrim today. He spoke of the both societies common mutual interest in local history. Strong relationships have developed over the years and this has been reinforced by the increased involvement in joint activities. He had received an e mail from Larry Breen, who is currently holidaying in Australia. Larry endorsed the unique relationship between the two groups. He said he was currently searching for Crocodile Dundee and wished everyone a great day at the AGM.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Richard read out the nominations as below, all were unanimously elected.

NOMINATIONS FOR OFFICERS

OFFICER	MEMBER	NOMINATED BY
Chairman	John Dooher	Strabane History Society
		Donegal Historical Society
		North Belfast Historical Society
		Helen Meehan
Vice-chairman	John Hulme	Donegal Historical Society
		Helen Meehan
Secretary	Bridgeen Rutherford	New Buildings Historical Society
		Strabane History Society
		Donegal Historical Society
		Helen Meehan
Treasurer	Bridie Bradley	West Belfast Historical Society
		Donegal Historical Society
		Strabane History Society

FEDERATION FOR ULSTER LOCAL STUDIES

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS

MEMBER	Nominated by
Roddy Hegarty	Strabane History Society
Aine NiDhuibhne	Donegal Historical Society Helen Meehan
Patrick Devlin	North Belfast Historical Society Strabane History Society
Francis Law	Ballinascreen Historical Society
Patrick Greer	West Belfast Historical Society North Belfast Historical Society
Pat McGuigan	Strabane History Society

SOCIETY REPORTS

Patrick Cross, Lecale and Downe, referred to the need for more participation, suggested the appointment of a liaison person in each society to ensure that the members received Federation communications.

Helen Meehan, Donegal, considered that there were so many other activities now available that people were swamped with choices, this impacting on Federation events.

John Hulme, Carrickfergus, mentioned some of the innovative projects being undertaken by societies such as the 'Glenelly Our Home' Facebook page. He suggested a combined Society Seminar to share experience, projects and activities as a starting point. This idea was taken up by Maria Higgins, Libraries NI who thought it was a great idea and very useful for people starting out.

Josie Herbison, Antrim Society, mentioned a joint project with the Randalstown Society about the linen industry in the area and display of the project that was available here in the building.

Doreen McBride, Banbridge, talked about the Society's participation in the People and Places project that involved tracing part of the route of the old coach road from Loughbrickland to Hillsborough, and possible future cooperation with other societies to trace the route further toward Lisburn and back to the border.

Jennifer Cunningham, Coleraine, mentioned that this year was the Society's thirtieth anniversary; it had produced 20 journals. The Society recognised the need to attract more and younger members. She would have liked to attend the People and Places seminar but it was too far in bad weather. She suggested that it would be useful to re-run it in other places. The Chairman replied that this could be done.

A NIFHS member, Ballymena Branch, told the meeting about a DNA project in which he was engaged. The society had advice from experts in the field and was keen to get as many people involved as possible. With DNA information it was possible to trace ancestry back for thousands of years and it could reveal links with people, e.g. from Scotland, reflecting the movement of people over many centuries.

FEDERATION FOR ULSTER LOCAL STUDIES

Patrick Greer, West Belfast, mentioned a joint project with the Belfast Civic Trust involving the preservation of Georgian Buildings.

Margaret Cartwright, NIFHS and North Belfast, recommended the NIFHS library in Newtownabbey as a great source of information about people and ancestry. It was open to the public.

Florence Chambers, Banbridge, talked about a project to chart the history of an isolated local Orange Hall. This resulted in a book that was well received and to numerous requests for similar research for other Orange Halls and buildings.

Pat McGuigan, Strabane, asked if anyone had approached schools about the possibility of arranging cooperation about local history in the Curriculum. This led to a lively discussion in which it was indicated that it was difficult for schools due to curriculum and testing pressures to add anything. Donegal still has some annual involvement but not as extensive as in past years.

The Chairman mentioned a recently started project in Strabane that involved going through the local newspapers week by week for the duration of WW1, identifying deaths. The intention was to try to find the relatives of the fallen and gather family memories and histories surrounding the war and their relative. It was a two-year project.

Shirley Cochrane, Donaghadee, said that the society had set up a new website last year. The society had a number of projects. One concerned the local people who had survived the war; what happened to them, what were their stories? They had worked with the QUB Living Legends team involving the scanning and recording of historical documents provided by local people. The Society also had an oral history project involving the oldest inhabitants recording their memories which would be published. Donaghadee had obtained Townscape Heritage funding and the society was cooperating in researching the history of the buildings and developing an educational pack for use in the local schools. The society worked closely with the Family History Society and cooperated in joint projects, something she would recommend to other societies.

LAUNCH OF DUE NORTH:

Bill Canning, Antrim Historical Society, launched the 2014 edition of Due North, quoted Macaulay that 'the history of a nation is in its newspapers' and an excellent article in the journal showed their importance in researching local history. Due North was an excellent publication and always has been. Despite the growth of the internet there was still merit and joy in reaching for the printed publication which was always to hand. Nothing changes; in one of the articles here about WW1, concern was expressed about young girls being held in women's prisons and just today there was a report on the radio about children in custody being held in inappropriate locations. As a Donegal man he was fascinated by cottage industries and in one of the articles about Arts and Crafts in Donegal he had been surprised to read that there had been lace schools in Donegal. He recommended the latest edition as worthy of the fullest support.

GUEST SPEAKER

Dr Eamon Phoenix, Guest Speaker, gave an informative, insightful and occasionally hilarious overview of the major personalities, events, activities and happenstances leading up to, during, and after WW1 in the context of the Ireland-wide Decade of Centenaries 1912 - 1923. The address was well received if the volume of the applause at its end is to be taken as the measure.

After lunch there was a video presentation of the history of the Gardens as due to the inclement weather it was impossible to venture through the gardens.

FEDERATION FOR ULSTER LOCAL STUDIES

APPENDIX 1

ATTENDANCE LIST

Name	Society
Katie Orme	Antrim & District
J Gaynor	Antrim & District
Florence Chambers	Banbridge
Rosemary Bunting	Lisburn Historical
W Canning	Antrim
Helen Meehan	Donegal
Brian O'Hara	NIFHS
Marian O'Hara	NIFHS
Matthew Herbison	Antrim & District
Josephine Herbison	Antrim & District
Doreen McBride	Banbridge
George McBride	Banbridge
George Beattie	Banbridge
Trevor Adams	Coleraine
Graham Mawhinney	Ballinascreen
Jennnifer Mawhinney	Ballinascreen
Michael Moore	Ballinascreen
Jennifer Cunningham	Coeraine
Margaret Cartwright	North Belfast
Patrick Cross	Lecale & Downe
Jean Clayton	Coleraine
Pamela Henderson	Coleraine
Raymond Turner	East Belfast
Doris McGuffin	East Belfast
Patsy Rainey	North Belfast
Thompson Steele	East Belfast
Bridie Bradley	West Belfast
John Hulme	Carrickfergus
Muriel Bell	Ballinascreen
Francis Law	Ballinascreen
P Hutchinson	Coleraine

FEDERATION FOR ULSTER LOCAL STUDIES

R Starrett	North Belfast
Peggy Weir	North Belfast
Patrick Greer	West Belfast
Joe McCorkell	New Buildings
Roisin Murray	Ballinascreen
Hilary Richardson	Ballinascreen
Jane Wright	Donaghadee
Shirley Cochrane	Donaghadee
Johnny Dooher	Strabane
Helen Rankin	Flame Gasworks Museum
Nuala McCrossan	Ballinascreen
Bridgeen Rutherford	New Buildings
George Rutherford	New Buildings
Julie Maxwell	Donaghadee
Pat McGuigan	Strabane
Pat Devlin	Individual member
Ruby Wylie	Cookstown
Ruth McKenzie	Cookstown
Una Teague	Cookstown
Molly Dinglas	Cookstown
Jennifer Hulme	Carrickfergus
Ann Weatheryl	Carrikfergus
Maria Higgins	Libraries NI
Aine NiDhuibhne	Donegal

APOLOGIES:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Society</i>
Maud Hamill	Abbey Historical Society
Rathfriland Historical Society	Rathfriland Historical Society
Larry Breen	Federation of Local History Societies
JJ Woods	Federation of Local History Societies