

Charity Number: NIC100280

Ulster Historical Foundation
Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements
for the financial year ended 31 March 2023

Ulster Historical Foundation

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Ulster Historical Foundation

TRUSTEES' AND OTHER INFORMATION

Trustees	Prof. Sir George Bain (resigned 28 July 2022) Mr Douglas Bartlett (appointed 27 April 2023) Mr John Gordon Ms Mary Harte Dr Myrtle Hill Mr John Hunter Dr Paula O'Hare Dr Éamon Phoenix (resigned 13 November 2022) Mr Cliff Radcliffe Mr Alan Skelton Mr Alan Watson
Chairperson	Sir Denis Desmond CBE
President	His Grace the Duke of Abercorn KG
Charity Number in Northern Ireland	NIC100280
Principal Address	Bradley Thallon House 44D Belfast Road Kiltonga Industrial Estate Ballyconnell Newtownards Co. Down BT23 44D
Auditors	Muldoon & Co Chartered Accountants & Statutory Auditors 16 Mount Charles Belfast BT7 1NZ Northern Ireland
Principal Bankers	AIB NI 11 - 15 Donegall Sq North Belfast BT1 5GB Northern Ireland
Solicitors	Napier and Sons 1-9 Castle Arcade High Street Belfast BT1 5DF

Ulster Historical Foundation

TRUSTEES' REPORT

for the financial year ended 31 March 2023

The trustees present their Trustees' Report and the audited financial statements for the financial year ended 31 March 2023.

The trustees have adopted the provision of the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland ((FRS 102) effective 1 January 2015 (Charities SORP (FRS 102))), in preparing the annual report and financial statements of the charity. The statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) shows the gross income from all sources.

The charity is a registered charity and although not obliged to comply with the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland FRS 102, the organisation has implemented its recommendations where relevant in these financial statements.

Mission, Objectives and Strategy

Mission Statement

The Foundation is established for exclusively charitable purposes and is a registered charity with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, NIC100280. The Foundation is presently governed by a trust deed dated 7 October 1998, and a scheme of incorporation dated 10 May 1999, which establishes the Trustees as a body corporate. The trust deed states the objectives of the Foundation as follows:

- to promote and encourage the public study of family history, genealogy, heraldry and local and Irish history with particular reference to Ulster;
- to promote the preservation and publication of the resultant data; and
- to undertake such other activities as shall be charitable at law.

The principal activities of the Foundation include publications, lecture tours, family history conferences, events and courses (heritage activities), a genealogical research and consultancy service, maintenance of a membership society known as the Ulster Genealogical and Historical Guild and pay-to-view and subscriber-only online databases. The Foundation also delivers regular educational programmes in the local community and speaking engagements to the heritage sector in UK and Ireland.

The charity's aims including the changes or differences it seeks to make through its activities

Ulster Historical Foundation was created to encourage an interest in the history of the province of Ulster; promote a positive image of Northern Ireland overseas; strengthen the links between Ireland and those of Ulster descent; broaden access to historical documents and records for Irish and Scots-Irish genealogy; and to inspire pride in Irish and Ulster heritage and culture.

The Foundation is a highly reputable research and publishing agency. It offers extensive knowledge on the sources available for tracing Irish and Scots-Irish ancestors. Services include online databases of over 2 million historical records, genealogy and history books, and personal ancestral research. Supporters subscribe to its Ulster Genealogical and Historical Guild (the Guild) - where users can share research interests, enjoy access to member-only databases, receive two annual publications, invitations to educational and social events, and product discounts.

For many years the output of the Foundation was achieved through research, publications and outreach programmes, but with the advent of the internet the Foundation began to make digitised sources available to a wide audience, in particular through its main web portal: www.ancestryireland.com; and various microsites dedicated to specific subjects, e.g. www.ancestryireland.com/scotsinulster. It also maintains a bookstore www.booksireland.org.uk. In the past 12 years Foundation has worked to make its expertise more easily available to the local community. In addition, for the past 17 years the charity has worked with partners to develop family history workshops for adult learners and courses with third level institutions (University of Ulster, Stranmillis University College and local regional colleges) and a broad range of community, heritage and historical organisations, as well as working with a series of partners to facilitate programmes with disadvantaged and socially marginalised groups.

Through its charitable activities the Foundation seeks to sustain interest in local and family history, to celebrate the diversity of the cultural heritage in Ulster and to equip the interested, amateur researchers with practical resources and hands-on archival research experience that will enable them to pursue their own research interests. These courses and other outreach activities with the local community help to demonstrate the Foundation's public benefit and value by giving local people access to information and expertise on historical research and also on how to get published.

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for the financial year ended 31 March 2023

Objectives

The charity's main objectives and strategies for achieving its objectives for the year

The charity's key objective in 2022-23 was to restore its range of services as the remaining Covid restrictions on PRONI's service were removed and to try to continue to ensure the organisation is self-financing. Group visits to PRONI became possible from late spring 2022, and access for individual researchers had returned to practically 'normal' some months before that. The broader global and economic factors including the war in Ukraine (Feb. 2022) and its implications, including the cost of living crisis impacted on the operation of the charity's activities, retarding discretionary spending by potential customers and clients, reducing donations and causing the costs of production, for example book publishing, which was a major part of the organisation's work in this year, to increase quite dramatically.

The Foundation seeks to pursue a business-orientated business plan without undermining its charitable objectives or by diluting the quality of the work for which it enjoys an international reputation, it pays close heed to the needs of the core market which it serves. In recent years the charity also sought to improve income generated through donations in support of its charitable activities. Some fundraising did take place, including a second 'Giving Tuesday' campaign which is held on the first Tuesday after Thanksgiving each year. In this year the Foundation could restore its public outreach activities, with a large number of engagements delivered during the year. These and the general advice that the charity gives to individuals and groups help to demonstrate the general aims and objectives of the charity in respect of its public benefit role.

Strategy

The charity's strategies for achieving its stated objectives

In line with its strategy the organisation has continued to publish specialist works of an historical nature on aspects of Ulster history; offers a genealogical research and historical consultancy service to individual and organisational clients; and has developed the range of resources available to its Guild members (the Ulster Genealogical and Historical Guild), including the further development of its research library. The charity provided remote access to digitised resources; and offers guidance and advice on how to begin research. The outreach programmes locally (e.g. university and college extra-mural classes, local events and programmes in the members' library) and further afield (e.g. North American lecture tours) and participation at family history fairs within the UK and Ireland returned to a level of activity similar to pre-pandemic levels.

The Foundation's charitable status is in recognition of the educational value of its publications, historical research and outreach provision. In that sense its trading activities are also part of its charitable activities, which contribute to its overall stated objectives. The strategy in recent years had been to increase and diversify the publication product range to derive greater financial return from the sale of these products. An emphasis on income generation across the Foundation's core activities has also been a feature of the strategy. The charity was able to host three family history conferences and courses during the year, the first since 2019, and online virtual courses are now part of the regular offering – mostly provided during winter months. Moreover, the availability of online historic births, deaths and marriages (across the island of Ireland), performed reasonably well during 2022-23, with income comparable to the previous year.

External competitors continue to take a significant slice of business in an already crowded market. These organisations have significantly greater resources and operate on a global scale, they therefore continue to make the trading environment difficult. Some historical consultancy projects with local groups and authorities in Northern Ireland were completed, though at a reduced level compared to the period before the pandemic. With PRONI reopening fully in late spring of 2022, as mentioned, the Foundation's in-person programmes could return, with three events held during the year. In addition, another overseas lecture to North America tour took place in March 2023, though as an indication that society has not returned fully to 'normal', the 'British Institute' program planned for October 2022 went ahead as a virtual event, not in-person, because of practical difficulties in holding the event in the Family History Library in Salt Lake City due to ongoing restrictions there.

Details of the significant activities that contribute to the achievement of stated objectives

The core activities undertaken by the Foundation, which also generate a significant proportion of the Foundation's revenue, contribute to the stated objectives of the charity. The Foundation published seven new titles in 2022-23 (compared to five in 2022-23) on a range of topics relating to the history of Ulster, as well as producing a number of reprints of old titles and some volumes of the Ordnance Survey Memoirs, mostly via digital print on demand.

The Foundation received 45 registrations for full ancestral reports plus 8 follow-on commissions for additional research, and prepared a further 36 specific research genealogical assessments for which clients paid an initial fee. In addition, it registered some 15 'Z' files - specific and limited pieces of research for clients - a category of research introduced to reflect the changing needs of research clients. In addition, 37 one-to-one consultations (many, though not all, provided virtually via Zoom) were undertaken for clients. Client research could be offered again without the encumbrances or the restrictions that were in place in the previous two financial years given that PRONI had removed all restrictions in late spring 2022. The charity tried to fulfil its public benefit role during the year by making its expertise accessible virtually

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for the financial year ended 31 March 2023

or via its website, and its local public engagement came back strongly in this year with a significant number of talks and presentations delivered for local societies, groups and heritage events, most of these were in-person, though some were virtual/hybrid events, reflecting a return to something closer to 'normal' compared to the past two years.

The Foundation maintains a database of interests of the Ulster diaspora through subscribers to the Guild, with a register of 1,333 subscribers at the end of the financial year. Another lecture tours in North America was held with 12 events being delivered on a three-week itinerary in March 2023. In addition, two virtual events for North American hosts were delivered in February 2023 and a third after year end in May 2023. As said, in-person conferences and courses could return in this year and three were held. Another recorded online course was offered in winter 2022/23 and again there was good take up by individuals of that facility. These activities each in their turn, contribute directly to the achievement of the stated objectives of the Foundation.

Volunteers

The Foundation has offered placements for more than twenty years to volunteers placed by various organisations such as New Horizons, Mencap, the Cedar Foundation, and the NOW Group. The Foundation offers volunteers placements by providing in-person work experience at the offices and also offers individuals the possibility of working remotely from home. A successful funding application was made to Awards for All for a new server and laptops to better facilitate remote working for interested parties. The volunteers have contributed in a meaningful way to the activities of the Foundation over the years and the charity seeks to offer placements again as it had done before the pandemic.

Structure, Governance and Management

Structure

The Foundation can appoint up to 14 trustees who meet quarterly. The Board appoint a chairman and vice-chairman annually at the Annual General Meeting. There are also honorary positions of President (The Duke of Abercorn KG), and Vice-President (The Lord O'Neill). The Executive Director is appointed by the Trustees to manage the operations of the Foundation including the production of business and strategic plans and the preparation of the annual financial statements.

Trustees are recruited by selection via advertisements placed on the Foundation's website and with bodies such as the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) as well as networking. Applicants are invited to submit an expression of interest outlining their skills and experience. Applications are considered by the Trustees and appointments made following the deliberations of the Trustees based on pre-determined criteria.

Governance

New trustees have an initial meeting with the Chairman and are provided with briefing material which normally includes:

- a copy of the Ulster Historical Foundation ('UHF') constitution, scheme of incorporation and charity registration documentation;
- copies of minutes from previous meetings of the Trustees;
- copies of Ulster Historical Foundation's 50th anniversary booklet (published May 2007) and A Vision Realised (produced in the mid-90s), both of which give a very useful synopsis of the early history of the Foundation; and;
- copies of the previous annual report, the business plan and subsequent updates.

In accordance with the Constitution, the trustees retire by rotation and being eligible, offer themselves for re-election.

The Trustees appoint sub-committees dealing with finance, resources and governance issues, and publications. These sub committees oversee the direction of the Foundation as well as collaboration with external bodies.

The Foundation is a member of, or signed up to, NICVA, the Irish Family History Foundation, the Fundraising Regulator, the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and some other trade affiliated bodies, however these networks have no impact on the operating policies of the charity.

In the year ended 2007 the Foundation created a dormant company, Ulster Historical Enterprises Limited (UHEL). Its intended use was to undertake certain commercial activities to enable the charity to pursue more effectively its charitable objectives. UHEL is a limited company with shares, the sole shareholder being the Ulster Historical Foundation. The company is currently dormant having not yet traded. The dormant subsidiary has not been consolidated as there were no transactions during the year or in the preceding year.

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Governance and Risk Management

The Finance and Resources Committee ('FRC') considers issues relating to corporate governance to ensure that the Foundation follows best practice.

The FRC has reviewed the major risks and in addition to the obvious risks of financing and damage or destruction to the office and its contents, a further major risk is the potential abuse and breach of copyright of digital material published online, and cyber-attacks on businesses generally which have increased significantly in recent years. The Trustees are mindful of this possibility, and online systems have been developed with security of the data as the primary concern. The levels of risk from commercial competitors in potential breaches of copyright are considered regularly at committee and Board level, and the Trustees have from time to time asserted their right to protect information belonging to the organisation and will continue to do so when the need arises.

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance

Publications

During the year the Foundation published seven new titles, including: *Scotch-Irish Migration to Charleston during the Colonial Period* by E.R.R. Green, (Apr. 22); *Northern Ireland 1921-2021: Centenary Historical Perspectives* edited by Nic Dháibheid, Coleman and Bew (June 22); *Lough Neagh: An Atlas of the Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage*, edited by Burke, Campbell and Roulston (July 22); *Through the Salerooms: Art Auctions in Belfast, 1807–1888* by Eileen Black (Nov. 22); *Desmonds: Fashioning the Future of Garment Manufacturing* by Jonathan Hamill (Dec. 22); *The Maxwells of Finnebrogue and the gentry of Co. Down, c. 1610–c. 1960: a resident and responsible élite* by A.P.W. Malcomson (Mar. 23, but launched in Downpatrick in May 23); and *Alexander Robb and the Making of British Columbia: the life and letters home of an Ulster Scots pioneer* by B.R.D. White (Mar. 23, but launched in PRONI in June 23). In addition, the Foundation reprinted via short run digital printing a small number of out of print titles, including several volumes of the Ordnance Survey Memoirs.

Income from publications for the year decreased from ££98,706 to £71,485 for 2022-23, a reduction of £27,221. This significant drop can be related to the huge increase in the cost of living, the impact on consumer confidence, buying power and discretionary spending. It was also exacerbated further by the steep rise in costs for materials and freight/postage. Simply put in some cases the postage to send a certain book title to a customer in the USA cost more than the purchase price of the book. Consequently, business-to-customer sales declined and it was a further reflection that as society returned to 'normal' and people resumed their preferred pastimes etc, they became even more less inclined to buy and read books than they had done in 2020-21.

Expenditure on publications stood at £91,279 compared to £59,891 for 2021-22 an increase of £31,388. This is an example of several 'birds coming home to roost' at the same time. Of the seven new titles produced in the year five were hardback full colour productions, and four of those five were very large and complex productions (*The Maxwells of Finnebrogue* running to 672 pages), which were timely and expensive to produce. In most cases the income had been received in a prior year 2020-21 and 2021-22, but most of the expenditure - especially the costly design and printing - were incurred in this financial year. The timeline of a large publication can be difficult to predict accurately, so it is perhaps unfortunate that all were produced during the year. However, that too was in some ways unavoidable as production had been held up for various reasons due to the pandemic and lockdowns in the calendar years 2020 and 2021.

Grants, sponsorship and donations

Grants, sponsorship and donations received during the year totalled £45,760 compared to £142,480 in 2021-22, of which £35,071 was received into restricted funds designated for specific projects. This year marked a return to grants and donations on a level more comparable to pre-pandemic norms. With no financial support from government received during the year, a significant proportion of the donor/grant income was given in respect of publication projects, including: £7,990 towards *The Maxwells of Finnebrogue*; £5,000 towards a reprint and new edition of *Irish Catholic Experience*; £5,856 towards *Through the Salerooms*; and £3,269 towards four other titles. That said, £9,960 was received from the Lottery fund's Awards for All to purchase a new network server and related hardware and laptop computers; and £1,231 from a number of private donors to help create a volunteer and library suite.

Genealogical and research services

Revenue from all genealogical and research services stood at £237,513 compared to £186,708 in 2021-22, an increase of £50,805. As mentioned in the annual report for the previous financial year the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, aside from a small window where it opened under a very restricted system in autumn of 2020, was closed from March 2020 until June 2021, when it reopened to the public but with an appointment system and still quite restricted compared to before the pandemic. It remained closed for group visits for the rest of the calendar year 2021. As a result of the reopening, income from search fees showed a slight recover, increasing from £19,522 last year to £22,733 in 2022-23, a rise of £3,211. Income from Research Consultancy decreased from £21,637 in 2021-22 to £12,199, a decline of £9,438. Given that historical consultancy projects nearly always rely on third party funding, and in some cases the Foundation has to tender for projects in open competition, income from this nominal is prone to fluctuate from year to year.

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Income from sales of online birth, marriage and death records declined slightly to £69,811 from £72,282 in 2021-22, a reduction of £2,471.

Costs of research services increased from £34,697 in 2021-22 to £50,402, a rise of £15,705. This is partly explained by the lecture tour costs of £10,619 (compared to £5,480 for the previous year), reflecting a more complex itinerary for March 23, two speakers being in North America in person and the increased costs of shipping materials for the tour. There was also £4,766 of direct cost incurred in relation to historical consultancy projects.

Guild

Income from Guild services decreased from £50,471 in 2021-22 to £43,554, a decline of £6,917. Related expenditure on Guild activities stood at £16,667 compared to £18,405 last year, a small drop of £1,738. This is due to the reduction in the total number of members, and thus a reduced mailing of annual membership packs, and also the second year since introducing a digital version of the Directory of Irish Family History Research, where members could opt for a digital-only subscription and thus forgo a top-up fee to receive a hard copy by post.

The number of paid up subscribers at the end of the current financial year was 1,333 compared to 1,485 in 2021-22 (a decrease of 152), of which 789 paid an annual subscription (new or renewing) in the year. The number of members for calendar year January to December 2022 stood at 1,359. The total number of five-year members in the financial year was 278 (2021: 298). There were 266 life members (including honorary), with 20 new life members joining in the financial year (2021: +four). The decline in Guild subscriptions – annual and five-year members – is indicative of the pressures charities and businesses faced as the cost of living crisis bit hard in the autumn of 2022 and people have continued to tighten their financial belts. Secondly, a number of long-standing members have either passed away or have taken the decision to allow their membership to lapse due to age.

Conferences, courses and classes

After 2.5 years of a hiatus the Foundation was able to host in-person family history conferences and courses as PRONI allowed group visits to take place again. Three events were held: a June conference, an October research program and also in June the charity devised a tour for a group visiting from New York City. As a result, income rose to £66,454 against £14,043 for last year (which was income generated for a recorded virtual course held during the winter months), an increase of £52,411. A significant number of the registrants for June and October were individuals who had been deferring since 2020 or 2021 and thus they had already paid their deposit or conference fee in full prior to this year, meaning total income was reduced on what it might otherwise have been. However, it did mean that the potential liability of refunding registrants was much reduced at year end as a result. The income for the year would also include registrations received before March 2023 for programmes taking place in September and October 2023. Direct costs related to these events stood at £14,241 for the year, where, understandably, there was no direct expenditure incurred in 2021-22 as no in-person events were held.

Prior to the June conference, US genealogist and tour guide, Donna Moughty, brought a group to use the Foundation's research library on 17 May 2022, the first group to visit the offices at Kiltonga since the charity moved in back in March 2020 – the result of course of the disruption caused by the pandemic.

At year end the Foundation was still potentially liable to refund a further approx. £6,821 in deposits paid for the cancelled programmes in 2020, 2021. Most registrants are willing to be patient and have in some cases deferred again themselves to a future year.

Outward promotion

A lecture tour took place in March 2023 with Fintan Mullan and Gillian Hunt delivering programmes in the following locations: Post Falls ID; Boston MA; Fairfield CT; New York City; Michigan City IN; Independence MO; Madison WI; Louisville KY; Pittsburgh PA; Leesburg VA; Jackson Purchase KY; Ottawa ON. In addition, two virtual one-day events were held in February 2023 for Philadelphia PA and Vancouver BC. A third was delivered after the main lecture tour for W.I.S.E. in Denver CO in May 23.

Income from the tour was approx. £25,697 for speaker fees, book sales consultations and Guild subscriptions and other items (speakers' fees, contribution to costs and advertising generated £12,485 of the total). Direct expenditure was £13,443, giving a gross surplus of £12,254. This of course does not include staff time involved in delivering the programmes. Long experience has shown that the tours generate further business in terms of research commissions, membership subscriptions, conference and course bookings, book sales and can lead to further invitations to speak overseas. While difficult to quantify, given that it might be several years before someone who attended a program commissions research or registers for a conference, the additional income generated as a result of these activities is an important factor in undertaking them. They also help to project a positive image of the organisation overseas and helps the charity to publicise and promote its activities and public benefit role.

Local community engagement

This year saw a return to activities more typical to the pre-pandemic norms. During the year the Research Director, Dr William Roulston, undertook the following local engagements: delivery of a 5-week course titled 'The Story of Ulster,

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1600–1800: A Social, Economic and Religious History of the Province over Two Centuries' in the village of Cullybackey, Co. Antrim (April-May 22); East Donegal Family History Festival, including conducting a tour of the historic graveyard at Taughboyne; and delivering a talk on early emigration from North-west Ulster to America at an evening devoted to the theme of migration (Aug. 22); virtual presentation with Dave Miller to the Appleton Irish Fest, Appleton WI (17 Sep. 22) delivery of a 4-week course called 'A River Valley in Co Tyrone: an exploration of the natural, built and cultural heritage of the River Strule landscape' for the Mellon Centre for Migration (Oct.-Nov. 22); online lecture on the '1718 Migration' for Libraries NI (5 Oct. 22); lecture on 'Researching farming families' to Randalstown Historical Society (6 Oct. 22); lecture on churchyards and cemeteries in and around the historic town of Carrickfergus in Carrickfergus Town Hall (9 Nov. 22); online lecture on 'of Scottish burial and commemoration practices in seventeenth-century Ireland' to the Church Monuments Society (12 Nov. 22); presentation on A.G. Lecky's book *Roots of Presbyterianism in Donegal in Raphoe* (24 Nov. 22); talk at the unveiling of an Ulster History Circle blue plaque to William Starrat at Strabane Library (25 Nov. 22) talk on 'Researching farming families' to the Ballymena Family History Society (26 Jan. 23); online talk on Scottish migration to Ulster to Scottish Interest Group of the Ontario Genealogical Society (8 Feb. 23); online talk on 'Researching farming ancestors' to the Irish Community Archive Network (9 Feb. 23); lecture on 'Records and Roots: people and the land in north-west Ulster' at the Twenty-First Annual Irish Migration Studies Lecture hosted by the Mellon Centre for Migration Studies (11 Feb. 23) and a talk on Ulster and Scotland to Ballymena Probus Club (27 Mar. 23).

Following the success of the online genealogy course delivered by Gillian Hunt in 2021, the Lurgan Townscapes Project and the Friends of the Shankill Graveyard in Lurgan, Co. Armagh, asked the Foundation to devise and deliver another course on tracing Irish ancestors in the countries to which they emigrated. Gillian and Fintan Mullan were the hosts for this innovative five-week long virtual course bringing in the expertise of the Foundation's contacts outside of the island of Ireland, including: Great Britain (Chris Paton); USA (Dave Miller); Canada (Melanie McLennan) and Australia (Dr Perry McIntyre). Once again, and because it was virtual and the subject matter related to three continents, an international audience participated in the course.

Gillian and Fintan also jointly delivered their second 'British Institute' hosted by International Society for British Genealogy and Family History (ISBGFH), from 10–14 Oct. 22. Before the pandemic this annual event was a week-long, in-person course held in Salt Lake City UT. Having had to cancel in 2020, and then go virtual in 2021, the organisers hoped that they might be able to return to an in-person event for October 2022, it was not to be. It became obvious in April of the year that there were too many practical issues to overcome and so it was delivered virtually.

Gillian delivered a genealogy course for Ulster Rugby which ran from February to April 2023. Separately Fintan Mullan gave a virtual presentation to the Genealogy Collective of five Long Island public libraries in New York state (1 Apr. 23); spoke in a virtual session about the history and work of Ulster Historical Foundation to the Twenty-Third Ulster-American Heritage Symposium held in Johnson City, TN (21 June 22); presented a virtual lecture to W.I.S.E. based in Denver CO as promotion and publicity for the full day virtual event scheduled to with this society for May 2023; and launched the annual *Lecale Review* journal for the Lecale & Downe Historical Society in the St Patrick's Centre, Downpatrick (27 Oct. 22).

A number of book collections were donated during the year to the Foundation's Research Library. These were appraised by Mr Fonsie Mealy of Fonsie Mealy Auctioneers, Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny and resulted in a gain on the revaluation of heritage assets of £15,600. This gain is shown on the Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) on page 16.

There were two change to the Board of Trustees during the financial year 2022-23. Prof. Sir George Bain retired from the board on 28 July 2022, and the staff and trustees were shocked and saddened to learn of the untimely death of Dr Éamon Phoenix on 13 November 2023. The organisation would also like to pay tribute to Baroness May Blood who had retired from the board in January 2021, and who passed away on 21 October 2023 just a few weeks before Éamon. Douglas Bartlett became a trustee after the financial year-end, on 27 April 2023.

Financial Review

The year to 31 March 2023, resulted in a deficit of £58,452 compared to a surplus of £35,912 in the year ended 31 March 2022. This was the first full financial year following the pandemic without any government assistance and as the Foundation sought to return to its full range of services and income generating activities.

By far the most significant factor in the year-end position was the very significant direct expenditure and related staff time and organisational resources absorbed by the publishing activities. As indicated above in Publications (page 7), of the seven titles produced five were complex and large full-colour hardback publications. They were expensive to produce and time demanding to deliver. And as indicated in the trustees reports for prior years the income had been received in 2020-21 and 2021-22 but the vast bulk of the costs were incurred in this financial year.

At year end the Foundation was potentially still liable for £6,821 in possible refunds for conference registrants who had signed up for programmes in 2020 and 2021 that had to be cancelled.

At 31 March 2023 the charity owed £44,909 in respect of the Bounce Back Loan, having repaid £5,091 plus interest by year end.

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The charity, like most other organisations, also faced steep increases in certain running costs, not least gas, electricity as the cost of living crisis bit evermore deep in autumn 2022. In addition, material costs for publishing increased, as did associated freight costs and postage costs for sending customer orders also rose significant. As the general public was cutting back on discretionary spending, a reduction in income across book sales, membership subscriptions, purchases of BMDs was experienced. These various factors fed into the difficult environment that led to the year-end position. Given that many aspects of the macro environment impacting on trading and running costs have not dissipated it is likely the financial year ahead will present challenges for the organisation.

Results and Dividends

At the end of the financial year the charity has assets of £612,171 (2022 - £649,621) and liabilities of £132,045 (2022 - £111,048). The net assets of the charity have decreased by £(54,451).

Reserves Position and Policy

The Trustees have reviewed the level of free reserves (that is those funds not tied up in tangible fixed assets or restricted funds). The Trustees have decided that, in principle, the Foundation should aim to build up and retain sufficient monies as a strategic reserve, to the equivalent of approximately 12 months of running costs for the organisation. For the year 2022-23, this would equate to a figure of approximately £356,178 in unrestricted funds.

In so doing, this is balanced against the on-going demands placed on the organisation, as it exists in a self-sustaining business model. The actual free reserves at the 31 March 2023 were £413,242 which represents approximately 14 months of activities. It is important that the Foundation tries to build on these free reserves to maintain the 12 month period set by the Trustees. The policy will be reviewed annually.

Plans for the future

The Trustees' main objective is to secure the longer-term financial viability of the organisation. In 2022 it was possible to restore the Foundation's in-person genealogy conferences and courses, and three events were held during the year. The organisation seeks to continue to attract overseas visitors to its programmes held in Belfast as well as participation on the virtual online genealogy courses offered through the winter months.

The development of the new website which made significant progress during 2022-23 should help to not only publicise and facilitate new elements to the in-person courses, but provide a more robust platform and improved visitor experience for individuals taking part in online courses. The aim is to launch the new website in 2023-24

In tandem with the rebuild of the website the organisation will continue to focus on creating digital resources for members and users which gathered pace in the second half of the financial year under review and which will continue into the new financial year.

In autumn 2022 the Foundation secured a project with the Diocese of Down and Connor to digitise and transcribe the old registers of burials, etc, for Belfast Milltown Cemetery. That project commenced in the last quarter of the year and will continue through 2023-24. Work will also continue on Catholic church registers for the period 1900 up to 1930.

A review of the Foundation's business activities and strategy is planned for the first quarter of the new financial year, with a report to be presented to a future meeting of the trustees.

Compliance with Sector-Wide Legislation and Standards

The charity engages pro-actively with legislation, standards and codes which are developed for the sector. Ulster Historical Foundation subscribes to and is compliant with the following:

- The Charities SORP (FRS 102)

Going Concern

The Trustees have reviewed their business plan, forecasts and the level of reserves held by the Foundation. After making enquiries, the Trustees have a reasonable expectation that the Foundation has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Accordingly, they continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the annual report and financial statements.

Public Benefit

Acknowledgement of the Foundation's public benefit role was confirmed with the award of charity registration in August 2014. Passing the public benefit test for each objective of the charity was a crucial part of the exercise to gain registered charity status. Recognition of the Foundation's public benefit gives the Trustees confidence that its work is valued by, and of value to, the wider community in Northern Ireland.

Through its various means of outreach (within the British Isles and further afield) the Foundation demonstrates the benefit of its service to the general public. The public can visit its offices, 9:00am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday, to make enquiries, ask for general advice and pick up free resources or useful materials. Appointments for in-person as well as

Ulster Historical Foundation TRUSTEES' REPORT

for the financial year ended 31 March 2023

virtual consultations can be made via the office. The Foundation makes available many resources online free of charge, including how-to guides, free indexes to records, case studies of research techniques, and free e-Books, and they continued to be available during the year.

The Foundation's staff deal with general and specific queries from the public by telephone, email, and in-person visits to the office. This year also saw a return to local speaking engagements to pre-pandemic levels of activities. During the year staff were busy, often at weekends and evenings (i.e. usually out of office hours), and contributed to the proceedings of local history societies and interest groups (see Local Community Engagement above for details). Staff undertook a USA lecture tour; delivered a virtual week-long course for the British Institute (usually held in-person in Salt Lake City). While some engagements were virtual or hybrid (not least those delivered for overseas organisations), the vast majority of local activities were in-person events.

The Foundation's offices have free onsite parking and direct access to an Ulsterbus route making it accessible to the general public, for locals and visitors alike. The research library is available for staff and members, though curious members of the public are always given free access to the facility should they make contact. The library can be used to host a range of free events, advisory sessions and book launches which are all open to the general public.

The Foundation gives advice and assistance to under- and post-graduate students (to whom it often also provides non-remunerated internships) and authors with advice on how to publish their project, whether or not it is with the Foundation. It does similarly with those undertaking local/community-based research projects. In addition, the Foundation accommodates academic and non-academic researchers, giving them access to the databases, research library and expertise, in nearly all cases without charge.

The senior staff give of their time on the boards of other organisations, including: the Irish Family History Foundation, the Northern Ireland Publications Resource, PRONI's Users' Forum, the Presbyterian Historical Society and the Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society. General advice is regularly offered to local history groups and individuals seeking to publish or deliver a heritage-related project in their area, regardless of whether the Foundation is the publisher or delivery agent. Digital resources on the Foundation's websites, free or otherwise, are accessible to the public.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 25th July 2024 and signed on its behalf by:



Sir Denis Desmond CBE
Chairperson

Ulster Historical Foundation
STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES
for the financial year ended 31 March 2023

The trustees are responsible for preparing the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

The law applicable to charities in Northern Ireland requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the charity as at the financial year end date and of the surplus or deficit of the charity and otherwise comply with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP
- make judgements and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether the financial statements have been prepared in accordance with applicable accounting standards, identify those standards, and note the effect and the reasons for any material departure from those standards; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees confirm that they have complied with the above requirements in preparing the financial statements.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 25th May 2024 and signed on its behalf by:



Sir Denis Desmond CBE
Chairperson