

Charity Number: NIC100280

Ulster Historical Foundation
Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements
for the financial year ended 31 March 2024

Ulster Historical Foundation

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Ulster Historical Foundation
TRUSTEES' AND OTHER INFORMATION

Trustees	Dr Paula O'Hare Dr Myrtle Hill Mr John Gordon Mr John Hunter Mr Cliff Radcliffe Mr Alan Watson Ms Mary Harte Mr Alan Skelton Douglas Bartlett (Appointed 27 April 2023)
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 BT23 44D
Auditors	Muldoon & Co Chartered Accountants & Statutory Auditors 16 Mount Charles Belfast BT7 1NZ Northern Ireland
Principal Bankers	AIB 11/15 Donegall Sq North BT1 5GB Northern Ireland
Solicitors	Napier and Sons 1-9 Castle Arcade High Street BT1 5DF

Ulster Historical Foundation TRUSTEES' REPORT

for the financial year ended 31 March 2024

The trustees present their Trustees' Report and the audited financial statements for the financial year ended 31 March 2024.

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 historical and 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 established 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 2.2 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 the Foundation's new website (launched January 2024) is now the primary portal through which the charity provides services to members and users, and disseminates advice, information and details of online resources that it has made available to the public. As well as giving access to the millions of records the Foundation has transcribed, the new website (ulsterhistoricalfoundation.com) gives free access to a broad range of resources and various former microsites dedicated to specific subjects, the Plantation of Ulster, the Scots in Ulster, Catholics in the Penal Era, Presbyterianism in Ireland, Ulster Gravestone Inscriptions, and others in development which are all located in the 'Discover' area of the website. The Foundation continues to work to make its expertise more easily available to the local community, and for 20 years the charity has developed historical and family history workshops for adult learners 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 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 2024

Objectives

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

The charity's key objective in 2023–24 was to make ready and launch a new and greatly enhanced web presence at <https://ulsterhistoricalfoundation.com/>. The website was launched in January 2024 representing the culmination (in this initial phase) of significant investment by the Foundation in terms of staff time and resources, and financial investment (paid to the website developer), representing a gross investment of approx. £67,000 by the organisation over 18 to 24 months. Given the significant increase in the costs of publishing the Foundation took the decision to significantly reduce its publications' output in 2023–24 (and in the period ahead) and to stop completely or significantly reduce the number of historical, i.e. non-genealogical titles. The focus is to be primarily on guides and resources that appeal to the core family history audience.

This had the effect of reducing production costs and third-party expenditure in relation to book production, but also resulted in the reduced valuation of stock held at year end by £19,555 (obviously, as very few new titles were produced). This reduction in the stock value from 1 April 2023 directly impacts the income and expenditure account for the year.

The year also saw considerable focus in-house in catching up on audit and reporting following the hiatus caused by the pandemic and by the year end all financial and charitable reporting in respect of the Foundation was up to date.

Group visits to PRONI returned to a more typical level of participation as that prior to Covid. Two conferences/research programmes were held in September and October 2023 with 41 and 29 registrants respectively at each event.

The Foundation staff continued to work with officers of Down and Connor diocese and Milltown cemetery to capture the historic burial records for the graveyard. By 31 March 2024 the majority of the records for the public ground areas had been transcribed, checked and uploaded to the Plotbox system.

The broader global and economic factors and their implications, continued to impact on the charity's activities. Discretionary spending by potential customers and clients, and donations continued to be retarded, and as publishing was reduced fewer opportunities to seek grants or for sponsorship were available.

The Foundation seeks to pursue a business-orientated strategy without undermining its charitable objectives or by diluting the quality of the work for which it enjoys an international reputation. In addition, it pays close heed to the needs of the core genealogical market which it serves. In recent years the charity also sought to improve income generated through donations in support of its charitable activities. Minor fundraising did take place, including a 'Giving Tuesday' campaign which is held on the first Tuesday after Thanksgiving each year. The Foundation continued 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 spring-summer 2023 the organisation undertook a strategic review where a more digitally-focus strategy was adopted. While the Foundation will continue to publish specialist works of an historical nature on aspects of Ulster history it will more particularly focus on genealogy guides and resources. The Foundation 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 new website has resulted in many new features for the benefit of members, including a growing digital library of materials that can be remotely accessed. The charity provides access to digitised resources for the general public and members; and the expanded and enhanced guidance/advice on how to begin research greatly contributes to the charity's public benefit role. The outreach programmes locally (e.g. college extra-mural classes, local events and programmes in the members' library) and further afield (e.g. Australia and New Zealand 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 change in focus adopted during 2023–24 – greater emphasis on the creation and improved access to digital resources and databases – also aids the aim to reduce the cost base associated with producing hardcopy books. For example, by year end staff had added 235 flipbooks of the Foundation's and other publishers' titles and 10 audio/video lectures to the site. 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 two family history conferences and courses during the year, and online virtual courses are now part of the regular offering – and proving popular. And

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for the financial year ended 31 March 2024

there is some small evidence of the online courses being a gateway to membership, further research or attendance at the in-person conferences. The online historic births, deaths and marriages (across the island of Ireland), performed reasonably well during 2023–24 against the backdrop of such an uncertain global environment.

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.

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. As part of a deliberate change of direction the Foundation published two new titles in 2023–24 (compared to seven in 2022–23), including *Alexander Robb and the Making of British Columbia: The life and letters home of an Ulster-Scots pioneer* and an e-Book version of *Calming Conflict: Northern Ireland, Metaphor, and Migration*. Aside from continuing to reprint some volumes of the Ordnance Survey Memoirs (via digital print on demand), two out of print titles were released, *The Strabane Barony during the Ulster Plantation, 1607–41* and *Major-General Oliver Nugent: The Irishman who led the Ulster Division in the Great War*.

The Foundation received 46 registrations for full ancestral reports plus 12 follow-on commissions for additional research, for which clients paid an initial fee. In addition, it registered some 8 '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, 54 one-to-one consultations (of which 19 were in-person and 35 were via Zoom) were undertaken for clients; and 57 preliminary assessments were registered during the year and two clients paid for individual assisted research at the Public Record Office. While the number of new files registered in this year remained broadly similar as the previous year, as the hour rate charged to clients was increased in spring 2023 the resulting income generated has increased.

The charity continued to fulfil its public benefit role during the year by making its expertise accessible virtually or via its website, and its local public engagement continued with a significant number of talks and presentations delivered for local societies, groups and heritage events.

The Foundation maintains a database of interests of the Ulster diaspora through subscribers to the Guild, with a register of 1,348 subscribers at the end of the financial year. No lecture tour was held in North America as the staff were committed to undertake a tour in Australia and New Zealand from 10 February to 2 March 2024, delivering 20 seminars or consultation sessions in three weeks. The online winter Irish Genealogical Essentials course attracted 29 registrants. 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 in-person work experience at the offices and also offers individuals the possibility of working remotely from home. 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;

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- 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.

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 two new titles, including: an e-Book version of *Calming Conflict: Northern Ireland, Metaphor, and Migration* (March/April 23) and *Alexander Robb and the Making of British Columbia: The life and letters home of an Ulster-Scots pioneer* (June 23 – although the costs of production were mainly incurred in 2022–23). Aside from continuing to reprint some volumes of the Ordnance Survey Memoirs (via digital print on demand), two out of print titles were released, *The Strabane Barony during the Ulster Plantation, 1607–41* and *Major-General Oliver Nugent: The Irishman who led the Ulster Division in the Great War*.

Income from publications for the year decreased from £98,706 for 2022–23 to £75,912, a reduction of £22,794. This decline is not a surprise given the decision by the charity to reduce its publishing output and focus on more digital content for members/users and the fact that only two (quite small) new titles were published.

Expenditure on publications stood at £53,598 compared to £59,891 for 2022–23 a decrease of £6,293. The high costs of postage and shipping meant that while direct costs of publishing could be reduced, the costs of fulfilling orders remain significantly high (and the end user in nearly all cases is paying for all or most of the shipping cost).

Grants, sponsorship and donations

Grants, sponsorship and donations received during the year totalled £52,660 compared to £45,760 in 2022–23 (an increase of £6,900), of which £4,095 was received into restricted funds designated for specific projects. The largest grant in restricted income was £3,000 from the Esme Mitchell Trust in respect of the forthcoming publication 'Ulster 1912–22: Change, controversy and conflict'.

Genealogical and research services

Revenue from all genealogical and research services stood at £249,923 compared to £237,513 in 2022–23, an increase of £12,410. Income from search fees increased from £22,733 last year to £36,985 in 2023–24, a rise of £14,252. Income from Research Consultancy increased from £12,199 in 2022–23 to £19,773, an increase of £7,574. Given that historical consultancy projects usually 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 to £63,971 from £69,811 in 2022–23, a reduction of £5,840.

Costs of research services increased from £50,402 in 2022–23 to £54,030, a rise of £3,628. This is partly explained by an increase in research salaries and wages, as a result of an increase in the hourly rate paid to researchers (to reflect the increased fees charged to clients).

Guild

Income from Guild services increased from £43,554 in 2022–23 to £52,539, a rise of £8,985. Related expenditure on Guild activities stood at £22,578 compared to £16,667 last year, an increase in costs of £5,911. This is mainly due to continuing very high cost of shipping materials overseas, notwithstanding the decision in 2021–22 to introduce 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 1,348 compared to 1,333 in 2022–23 (an increase of 15), of which 782 paid an annual subscription (new or renewing) in the year. The number of members for calendar year January to December 2023 stood at 1,335. The total number of five-year members in the financial year was 314 (2022: 278). There were 252 life members (including honorary), with one new life member joining in the financial year (2022: 20). As in recent years 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

The Foundation hosted two in-person family history conferences and courses in PRONI during the financial year: a September conference and an October research programme. Income from these activities stood at £55,105 against £66,454 for last year, a decrease of £11,349. Though it is worth pointing out that three events were held in 2022–23, with the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society asking the Foundation to host an event for them in June 22.

The online Irish Genealogical Essentials course attracted 29 registrants during autumn/winter 2023/24 generating £10,725 against which there is almost no direct expenditure other than a small amount of core staff time administering the programme and taking part in the scheduled live Q&As in which the participants take part.

Direct costs related to the conference events stood at £20,639 compared to £14,241 for the previous year, representing an increase of £6,398 in expenditure. The complexity of the itineraries each year, combined with the increase in costs post-Covid (not least the costs of researchers' time), does impact the costs of conferences from year to year.

Outward promotion

A lecture tour took place in Australia and New Zealand in February and March 2024 (the last tour in these countries was in 2017) with Fintan Mullan and Gillian Hunt delivering 20 programmes in the following locations: Adelaide SA; Perth WA; Brisbane QLD (x 2 events); Nambour QLD; Melbourne VIC (2 x events); Canberra ACT; Sydney NSW; Auckland, Dunedin, Christchurch and Wellington, plus one-to-one consultations also held in Melbourne, Canberra, Auckland, Pukekohe, Wanaka and Wellington.

Income from the tour was approx. £16,216 for speaker fees, book sales, consultations and Guild subscriptions and other items. Direct expenditure was £9,694, giving a gross surplus of £6,522. This 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 programme 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 enables the charity to publicise and promote its activities and public benefit role.

Board membership

There was only one change to the Board of Trustees during the financial year 2023–24. Douglas Bartlett joined on 27 April 2023. Two changes that occurred post year end included Dr Myrtle Hill, who stood down on 31 July 2024 and John Hunter, who retired from the Board following the trustees meeting on 28 August 2024.

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Local community engagement

Dr William Roulston spoke to the Learmount Community Development Group on 28 April 2023 on landed estate papers and farming records. On 31 May he delivered a lecture in Benburb Priory to the O'Neill Country Historical Society on the 'Great Convention' organised in Dungannon by the Volunteer movement in February 1782. On 15 July, he joined colleagues at the Mellon Centre for Migration Studies, Drs Liam Campbell and Paddy Fitzgerald, in leading a group from East Tennessee State University around north Donegal. On 27 July he spoke at a conference in Johnston Central Library in Cavan titled 'In Anxious Expectation', which looked at the themes of migration and genealogy. On 29 September, he was invited by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council to conduct a tour of Ahoghill on the theme of graveyards and churches as heritage assets, with a particular focus on the story of Dr James Lawson Drummond and Eliza O'Rourke. A talk to the Ballinascreen Historical Society on land and people in early eighteenth-century Ulster was on 3 October. On 26 October, he gave an online talk on the Registry of Deeds on behalf of Lurgan Townscape Heritage. On 28 October, William delivered a lecture on Scottish migration to the Bann Valley in the seventeenth century at a very well attended event organised by Garvagh Museum on the theme of migration. On 6 November, William spoke on landed estate records for County Donegal at a seminar entitled 'Going North: Landed Estates in the counties of Cavan, Donegal & Monaghan, 1700–1914'; this event had been organised by the University of Galway to mark the expansion of the Landed Estates Database into these counties. He delivered a workshop on behalf of the National Churches Trust as part of its Treasure Ireland project on 8 December at Carlisle Road Methodist Church in the city of Derry. On 27 January 2024, at the Priory, Benburb, he was the guest speaker at the launch of the latest issue of the journal *Dúiche Néill*, published by the O'Neill Country Historical Society. On 26 March, he spoke to the Belfast Branch of the North of Ireland Family History Society (NIFHS) on 'Scottish migration to Ireland in the seventeenth century and the sources for its study'.

Research Officer, Gillian Hunt, was busy with other genealogy workshops in 2023–24. She ran several sessions with members of the Ulster rugby team in February (23) and April on researching their family history, which included a visit to the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. Gillian also taught a 10-week genealogy course with Lagan Village Community Centre in Belfast and collaborated with Aghalee Parish Heritage Project, running classes on working with visitors and genealogy. Separately Fintan Mullan spoke to Killinchy Probus group at the Foundation's research library on 9 May 2023 and presented via Zoom to the Appleton Irish Fest, Appleton, WI, USA on 16 September.

Financial Review

The year to 31 March 2024, resulted in a deficit of (£22,162) compared to a deficit of (£58,445) in the year ended 31 March 2023. Although any deficit is unwelcome, there is a little comfort in it being significant reduced on the previous year and is set against the backdrop of a difficult economic environment. Moreover, the decision to reduce publishing output in favour of a more digital strategy meant stock levels at year end were significantly lower than 2022–23 and not unexpectedly had a negative impact on the financial figures for the year.

At 31 March 2024 the charity owed £39,461 in respect of the Bounce Back Loan, having repaid a further £6,515 by year end.

The charity, like most other organisations, also continues to deal with increased running costs, not least gas and electricity. In addition, freight and postage costs for sending customer orders (especially overseas) remain at a significantly higher level than pre-2022, and in fulfilling orders for customers or undertaking the annual Guild mailing such costs have to be incurred. These various factors fed into the difficult environment that led to the year-end position. The year while not a success was much improved on the previous one, and the launch of the new website in the last quarter of 2023–2024 and the preparations for the forthcoming 'Townland Atlas of Ulster' (notwithstanding the many challenges in the macro environment) means the charity is better placed than 12 months prior, and is looking forward to the new financial year.

Results and Dividends

At the end of the financial year the charity has assets of £457,964 (2023 – £497,403) and liabilities of £70,042 (2023 – £87,137). The net assets of the charity have decreased by (£39,439).

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 2023–24, this would equate to a figure of approximately £400,452 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 2024 were £402,839 which represents approx. 12 months of activities. It is important that the Foundation tries to build on these free reserves to move towards the 12-month period set by the Trustees. The policy will be reviewed annually.

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for the financial year ended 31 March 2024

Plans for the future

The Trustees' main objective is to secure the longer-term financial viability of the organisation. The new website and a greater focus on digital content will be a major objective for the period immediately ahead. More flipbooks will be added to the online digital library and significant releases of new database content (for members and the public) are planned for the next financial year. Staff intend to extend the content with new subjects for the 'Discover' area of the website, with 'Irish Migration', 'A Sense of Place' and 'Big Houses and Estates in Ireland' all in development.

With a stronger focus on digital assets and the website as the primary interface with the public, the Trustees will establish a risk sub-committee. Cyber security is one of the areas of risk that is being prioritised, with a cyber security lead appointed from the staff to help the risk sub-committee develop an incident response plan to prepare for any future incidents.

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 online course will be complete re-recorded and updated for 2024–25, and experiments with formats for the in-search research programmes will be trialled in 2025–26.

The Foundation will continue to work with the Diocese of Down and Connor to digitise and transcribe the old registers of burials, grave owner books, etc for Belfast Milltown Cemetery. Work will also continue on Catholic church registers for the period 1900 up to 1930.

In 2024–25 the Foundation hopes to publish a major new research asset called a 'Townland Atlas of Ulster'. Prepared by Andrew Kane (of the Foundation's research team) this will be a significant resource providing colour coded maps (by landed estate) for the 16,000+ townlands in the nine-county province of Ulster. While work is ongoing interest has already been strong with subscribers/donors and pre-orders for this book received in year. The printed Atlas is stage one, and that is the primary focus for the next year, the intention is that the following stage will be to develop the Atlas into a digital tool for web use.

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 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 of local speaking engagements to more pre-pandemic levels of activity. 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 an Australia/New Zealand lecture tour. 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 a Translink 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.

Ulster Historical Foundation
TRUSTEES' REPORT
for the financial year ended 31 March 2024

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 16 Jan. 2025 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 2024

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 16 Jan 2025 and signed on its behalf by:


Sir Denis Desmond CBE
Chairperson