

Secretary's Report 2021/2022

The Society's year began with our AGM. The previous management and committee apart from the Treasurers position with Marie stepping down due to health problems were elected to serve for another year. As there were no nominations for a replacement George James agreed to look after the finances meantime.

After the business was completed the re-elected Chair Margo Groves welcomed the speaker for the evening Mr Robert Trotter who gave a very interesting and informative talk on the History of the Annesley Gardens and Estate.

In October we were shocked and dismayed at the death of our Presidents wife following a short illness. She had been a long standing and faithful member of the Society since its inception. Her generous nature and willingness to help and support members and the wider community are sadly missed by everyone.

The October speaker was Mike Hartwell, a keen photographer from Killyleagh. His inspiring talk with first rate photographs showed the beauty of many local areas in Co Down during various seasons.

November speaker Tatiana Sokolskaia from Russia now living here in Rathfriland brought food for thought as she described the harsh conditions she and family members went through growing up and living in Soviet Russia before eventually moving to the West.

January brought disappointment as we had to cancel our Annual Dinner due to Covid restrictions.

In February Clive Scoular, well known historian, lecturer and writer of several books visited us once again and talked about the "Stolen Village" of Baltimore Co Cork and in March Primrose Wilson and her husband kept us enthralled with details and photos of the work of the Follies Trust.

April and May saw us embarking on two outings, firstly to Pontyzpass with Roy Copeland and secondly to Killyleagh and a visit to the well-known castle along with a bit of retail shopping.

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In conclusion I would like to thank the committees for their support over the year and you the members for coming out to the meetings for without you the Society would founder. Thanks also to Barbara for all her hard work in getting us grants to pay our way and to my husband George for keeping the books up to date. To The Parish Centre Committee for letting us use the hall for our meetings and Marie McComish, Caretaker for getting the hall ready each month.

Mr President, fellow members this concludes my report.

Secretary's Report 2022/23

Our Society's year began in September 2022 with the AGM. The President, vice president, Chair, vice Chair secretary were re-elected, George James, Noreen Smith, Catherine Fegan, Shelagh Henry and Barbara Dixon were also duly elected.

The speakers for the evening were Arlene Copeland and Ann Harper from Knock Iveagh Group who gave a very interesting talk about the Ancient Burial Ground at the Knock Hill. In October Glynn Kelso enthralled us with old maps and in November we enjoyed a talk with Una Walsh accompanied with slides of Slieve Gullion area.

In January 2023 we began our 50th Anniversary celebrations with a dinner in the Downshire Hotel, Hilltown and since then we have had a very busy year.

February saw Bronagh McAtasney from NI Digital Film screen delight us with films from their archives of the Mourne area featuring some of our own members and in March our speakers were Martina Byrne and Mary Savage from the Shared History Group and in April the life of Andrew George Scott aka Captain Moonlight was explored through music and verse in Chandlers House. Our speaker Ciaran Conliffe, blogger from Belfast had done a lot of research about Capt. Moonlight and brought many of his escapades to life.

In May our annual outing was a bus tour of the Slieve Gullion area with Una Walsh a very knowledgeable and extremely talented guide followed by light refreshments at Killeavy Castle annex.

Behind the scenes during the year Barbara, Patricia, George, Margot, Dr Shannon and myself have worked extensively on the Historical Trail Booklet first published in 2000. It has taken quite a few meetings and endless discussions before we were satisfied with the new enhanced and extended booklet. Many of the old plaques which were erected back then were showing signs of wear and tear due to

weather over the past 23 years and needed replaced. At present the new plaques with QR codes are being put in place which we hope will meet with everyone's approval. However, we still have to record the information so the general public can hear as well as read the booklet and we hope they will prove to be popular with residents and tourists alike.

All these events this year were made possible because of the generous grant from the National Heritage Grant and we are indebted to them, without their help we would not have been able to have this lasting accolade. Our thanks go to Barbara for that. I think that Rathfriland Historical Society should be very proud of what we have achieved not only with this but the fact that the Society has continued for 50 years, have published several books, now got our own webpage up and running with the help of Sam Faulds and Mark Potts 2 very helpful gentlemen who have agreed to help maintain it for the next 3 years.

My thanks to all the committee for their help and support over the past year also to Patricia, Barbara, Margot, George and Ian for all their help.