

**AGM 2024 Donaghmore Historical Society May 13<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**Apologies:** Pat Boyle, Marie Horisk, Richard Byrne, Peter Newman, Maighréad Martin, Eric Challoner and Frank Shields.

**Present:** Pat O'Neill, Sammy Wilson, Seamus McCrystal, Leslie Holmes, Averil Morrow, Evelyn Cardwell, Plunkett Boyle, Connor MacGinty, Mary MacGinty, Graham and Mrs Mawhinney, Ann McClelland, Eoin Boyle, Mr. Sloan, Malcolm Hazleton, Keara Boyle, Patricia Bogue, Martin McKenna, Frank McArdle and others.

**Chair:** Evelyn Cardwell:

The Centre was almost in darkness when we arrived at 7.00pm. This was due to a local fault in the supply and a team from POWERNI was working on it.

The business of the AGM was to select a committee.

**Evelyn Cardwell**, in her chairperson's statement, gave an account of the work of the society during the past year, highlighting the events for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Donaghmore Historical Society and the success of our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary journal. She also mentioned the recent employment via JobStart of a young Heritage assistant, who was making excellent progress.

**Plunkett Boyle**, our treasurer, gave a good outline of our financial affairs, highlighting the heavy toll on our finances during the lockdown, when we had no income but had to pay the society's bill. He mentioned the various grants that we had received from MUDC, Fibrus, private donations and emphasised the importance of the sales of our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary journal to our current finances. Plunkett presented his report in very clear, table format.

**Patricia Bogue**, secretary, outlined the events of the past year. The 140<sup>th</sup> year for our building, which was once a National School and the talk on the National School system of education. The European Heritage Days, the themes of all our talks, the production of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Journal, the celebrations, and our international visitors.

**It was now time to nominate a committee:**

**Averil Morrow in the chair:**

**Averil Morrow proposed by Mary MacGinty, seconded by Seamus McCrystal**

**Evelyn Cardwell proposed by Eoin Boyle, seconded by Tony Davidson**

**Mary MacGinty proposed by Patricia Bogue, seconded by Averil Morrow**

**Eoin Boyle proposed by Martin McKenna, seconded by Tony Davidson**

**Pat O'Neill** proposed by Tony Davidson, seconded by Evelyn Cardwell

**Tony Davidson** proposed by Pat O'Neill, seconded by Patricia Bogue

**Patricia Bogue** proposed by Plunkett Boyle, seconded by Malcolm Hazelton

**Margaret Martin** proposed by Eoin Boyle, seconded by Tony Davidson

**Pat Boyle** proposed by Mary MacGinty, seconded by Plunkett Boyle

**Plunkett Boyle** proposed by Averil Morrow, seconded by Martin McKenna

**Sammy Wilson** proposed by Pat O'Neill, seconded by Malcolm Hazelton

**Roy Marshall** proposed by Malcolm Hazelton, seconded by Averil Morrow

**Frank Shields** proposed by Averil Morrow, seconded by Mary McGinty

**Richard Byrne** proposed by Tony Davidson, seconded by Patricia Bogue

**Total of 14 nominations**

**The next committee meeting will be held on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> June at 8.00pm in the Heritage Centre**

At the end of the AGM the Centre was still in darkness but Evelyn Cardwell decided to go ahead with her talk using her laptop computer. She had gone some way with her most interesting talk when the electricity suddenly came on. She was able to use the screen for her images and to complete a fascinating talk about the Sloan family of Donaghmore some of whom had emigrated to Ohio and one of whom who founded a town there called Dungannon.

13<sup>th</sup> May '24

**Donaghmore Historical Society** AGM

**Secretary's Report for 2023-2024**

Last April we lost our much loved and respected chairman, Bertie Foley. Bertie was a very accomplished man who was a superb local historian, a wonderful communicator, and a very gifted teacher and a good friend. Bertie died suddenly to our great shock and sadness, just as his year as chairman was coming to an end.

One of our first events of the year was an iPad internet course for over 65s which was linked to our Fibrus contract. It ran successfully with teacher Patricia Hynds and was well attended.

The next event of the year was our open days for European Heritage in September. Committee member Averil had made a very nice video of the history of this old school building which was 140 years old in 2023. This film ran silently in the background as visitors came and went. We did not have a lot of visitors for our first opening, but among our visitors we did have descendants of Robert Brown of the Donaghmore soap and candle factory.

The past year has been a very busy one for the society. It was the 40<sup>th</sup> year of the founding of Donaghmore Historical Society, so to mark the event we had decided to publish a journal. Bertie Foley was to have been editor, but Evelyn Cardwell had to take on that major responsibility. The deadline for completion of articles was the end of May 2023. A lot of kind people had volunteered to write articles, and all had them in by the deadline. Corrections were done by Evelyn and some committee members and eventually the journal with the 1710 map of Donaghmore on its cover was ready to be launched. It had a very successful launch on 24<sup>th</sup> October in Ranfurly House, Dungannon, by Joe Mahon of Mahon's Way on ITV. The launch was well attended, and Joe gave a memorable history talk. The journal was very well received.

The 40th anniversary celebrations did not finish with the production of a journal. It ended with a very nice dinner in the Gables Restaurant, organised by Evelyn, with speaker Graham Mawhinney and others. Committee member Richard Byrne had baked a huge and beautiful cake for the occasion that everyone enjoyed. It was a memorable night.

Our first public lecture of the year was given on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> October by Sebastian Graham, and it was about the growing and scutching of flax and the many processes and dangers that had been involved in that very labour intense industry of our forefathers.

In November Professor Roger MacGinty gave an interesting talk about a murder along Northland Row, Dungannon, in the 1880s, and the strange justice system existing at that time.

The public lecture in December was relating to our centre here, which 140 years ago had opened as a National School. Speaker, Dr. Brian Lambkin gave a very interesting talk about the National School system of Education and how schools were built so that young children did not have more than 3 miles to walk to them.

Our talk in January by our chairperson Evelyn Cardwell, about the town of Dungannon Ohio, had to be postponed due to stormy weather. You will hear Evelyn's talk after the AGM tonight.

In February we had Joe Lawson's to talk about the history of MoyPark and how it has developed into a mayor industry, with Donaghmore hatchery being one of the largest in the world.



In March, committee member Rev. Tony Davidson gave an interesting talk about his McMinn family who had emigrated to New Zealand early in the last century and their role in WW1 and the sadness suffered by their parents when one son was killed in the war.

We moved to Ranfurly House for the April talk on the history of drama and music in this area. Committee member Mary McGinty who gave the talk, had dedicated it to the late Bertie Foley. Sean Faloon of the Bardic Theatre introduced it. Her talk attracted a large crowd, and the extra space was much needed.

This year saw the unveiling of Donaghmore's replica cross at the Public Records Office in Belfast in early May. It had been made about 30 years ago to allow the old cross to be preserved.

Thanks to the efforts of Pat O'Neill, the gravestones in Donaghmore's new graveyard have been recorded. We need some funding now to make them accessible online to family historians and others.

Another important event was the employment through the Jobstart Scheme of a young heritage assistant for the society who will archive our many valuable local history materials, books, maps, journals etc. Connor started in early April, and he is a most excellent and very motivated worker. Evelyn has worked on a training programme for him which she attends along with him.

During Mary McGinty's preparation for her drama history talk, she met BBC reporter Niall McCracken, and she introduced him to a 1954 photograph of the circus crash in Irish Street, Dungannon, given to us by Eric Challoner. Niall researched the story and featured it with dramatic footage on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of disaster, on the BBC, last week.

Our various policies on Fire, Safeguarding, First Aid etc., have been updated this year.

Having access to WIFI and better technology has meant that members and non-members are able to access our public lectures and committee meetings by Zoom and Eventbrite for a small fee. Our Meeting Owl with its multi-directional microphones is a great asset for questioning our speakers and hearing their reply.

We were unable to get funding to establish our restored 7<sup>th</sup> century mill in a suitable location, but we are continuing to work on that, and we hope to be successful eventually.

We have had many visitors from America, Australia, Canada, England in contact with us throughout the past year and many have been staying locally which helps local businesses. We have constant requests for information about families who had to emigrate from the parish.