

# ANTRIM AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CHARITY NUMBER NIC104890

CHAIRMANS REPORT

2022/23

The current year of 2022/23 has been a year of change for the Society. During the years 2020/22 we were either unable to meet due to Covid Restrictions or when permitted met outdoors at different locations, mostly the Lough Shore Picnic Area in Antrim. Things were changing which enabled us to meet indoors, although this did not take place until October 2022.

Following the Annual General Meeting during May 2022 we were still meeting outdoors and following the visit to Muckamore Mill Village in April, we continued the series "Beetling Mills and the history of Linen, along the Six Mile Water. On a beautiful Summer evening in June we met at Kirby's Lane Car Park on the Moylena Banks to hear about and visit the remains of the Beetling Mills along the river.

July 2022 saw a slight change from the Linen Industrial Heritage to that of Corn Milling and Scutching, which had been carried out at a Mill at the centre of the hamlet of Milltown, between Antrim and Randalstown, for 200 plus years until the middle of the last century. The "Mill on the Corner" as it was described in Brendan Smith's book is now in a very run down state and having had all the remaining machinery removed and not being a "listed building" is due for demolition. That evening was followed by a visit to the "Randalstown Viaduct, (thanks being due to St. McNissi's Church, for making their car park available to us) there we heard about the construction in the mid 1800's at an enormous cost for that time and it's use to carry a branch line from Cookstown Junction to the town of Cookstown. Again it was a beautiful evening which was enjoyed by those attending.

August, saw us back in Antrim in Mill Row (present day Riverside) to hear the continuing story of manufacturing along the Six Mile Water.

September, was to be our outing to Hillsborough Castle and Grounds, but due to the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Castle was closed and we had to postpone our visit.

We were to hold our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary dinner in October/November 2020, but for Covid reasons, this also had to be postponed.

In October, we visited First Antrim Presbyterian Church (formerly Mill Row Church) kindly granted, where a good number heard the history of the Congregation, formed in 1726 following a break away from the First Presbyterian Church Antrim (Non Subscribing). For all these talks from April to October 2022, my thanks go to Josephine Herbison for all the work involved in their preparation.

Our long anticipated Anniversary Dinner was finally arranged in the Dunsilly Hotel on the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2022. Again a goodly number (with at least one person in attendance, who was a founder member of the Society, way back in 1980) enjoyed a lovely meal, Cabaret, and a few speeches.

Members were now happy to meet indoors and after a break during December, arrangements were made for us to use Stiles Community Centre, Clotworthy not being available in the evenings. Our first meeting in the new venue, was a history of Arthur Bell Nicholls, husband of Charlotte Bronte. Again thanks are due to Josephine Herbison, for her research.

February was most enjoyable, when Rev Derek Kerr, provided us his potted history of "Royal Bits and Pieces" and in addition to the historical part, also gave us an hour filled with humour. March was in in house, with members bringing along and talking about, items which are of sentimental value and interest to them. Again an enjoyable evening was had.

April brought along Danny Kinahan, who talked about and showed a power point, concerning his family and Castle Upton. A goodly number enjoyed an interesting evening. This evening brings us to our Annual General Meeting, held indoors for the first time in the past three years.

It's good to be back.

Thank you all for your continued support through the bad times and hope that the Society will now continue from strength to strength, as we continue in 2023 into 2024.

Matt Herbison (Chairperson)

SECRETARY

DATE

Josephine Herbison

23/05/23

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