

ANTRIM AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CHARITY NUMBER NIC 104890

CHAIRMANS REPORT

2024/25

Some years ago there was a song in the charts called: "IT'S BEEN A GOOD YEAR FOR THE ROSES". The past year in my opinion has been a "A GOOD YEAR FOR ANTRIM AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY". The numbers attending our meetings is up, that on some evenings it is becoming a problem to get everyone seated. A good problem to have as indeed some societies in the area have had to close and others find numbers very small. However do not let us dwell on the past, but keep up the good work and look forward to the future.

Following our AGM on the 28th May 2024, we closed for the Summer, with our outing being postponed until August, when a number of our group visited the Transport Museum at Cultra. Even with small numbers, the day was enjoyed by those who attended and I'm sure we all learned something about transport in Northern Ireland over the centuries that we were not aware of prior to the visit.

September 2024, brought Christine Donnelly from the Belfast Charitable Society, better known to us as Clifton House. Christine spoke and showed a Power Point presentation entitled: A Poor House through the Centuries. The evening was enlightening and indeed we learned much about the work of Clifton House over a long number of years. Thank you Christine.

October brought to us, Mabel Jenkins, a local story teller, who brought us some yarns and stories from yester years. The evening was much enjoyed.

For the November meeting, Gary Blair, from the Ulster Scots Agency was to be with us. Unfortunately due to illness, his place was taken by William Olphert, who is Director of Education, and indeed Gary's boss at the Agency. He was indeed a most welcome replacement and had the room 'in stitches', an Ulster Scots saying. Thanks were expressed to William for the enlightening and entertaining evening.

The Society does not meet in December, but we had been asked by the organising committee from First Antrim Presbyterian Church, if we would display a Christmas Tree at their upcoming Festival during that month. The Committee readily agreed and Gordon Stewart agreed to construct the tree from a pallet. This he did with exceptional results and we duly erected and displayed the Tree at the festival. The tree theme was based on 'The Streets and Old Street Names in Antrim in the past, and advertising the work of the Society. Favourable reports on the display were received. Thank you Gordon and also those who erected and decorated the Tree.

The January 2025 was a more informal evening with some members reading highly entertaining stories from some 'Ulster Writers' and a quiz which had been organised. Tea/Coffee and biscuits were also enjoyed.

For the month of February, Jonathan Barkley and Katy McMonagle, both Archaeologists, spoke to us and displayed some items recovered during excavations at the Steeple Road and also around the Old Courthouse in the town. This evening was most enlightening and our knowledge of the ancient history of our town was much increased.

Thankfully, Dr David Hume MBE, our speaker, originally arranged for the April meeting was able to change his diary and speak in March. David is no stranger to the Society, having spoken to us on many historical subjects over the years and indeed officially opened our 40th Anniversary Exhibition in Antrim Library in 2020, just before Covid. David was given a hearty welcome and spoke to us on the Plantation of Ulster in the 17th century. It was good to have David back with us and I feel he will be back with us, soon.

Our April meeting had to be postponed for a week, until 29th of the month, due to Easter Holidays. The evening was an in-house one, titled 'At The Pictures' when members were asked to bring along, pictures or other items, of some particular interest to them, and talk to us about that picture or item. The evening went quite well.

This evening, is our Annual General Meeting, a necessity as required by the Charity Commission, with whom we are registered. Elections of Officers and Members of Committee will also take place. Please also enjoy the Tea/Coffee etc and hopefully what comes later.

May I place on record, my thanks to Josephine, the Secretary who is retiring from that post after a number of years. To Ann, the Treasurer, once again I express my thanks for keeping our finances in order. Ann is also retiring this year again after a number of years service. Thanks also are due to the hard working Committee and indeed the Vice Chairperson, your hard work is much appreciated. Thanks are also due to Mrs Judith Wilson our Auditor, for preparing our accounts for the Charity Commission.. Thank you Judith. I must, at this stage pay a grateful thanks to our President, Mr Bill Canning, especially in the past year, when a delicate matter arose, which we had to deal with. Thank you Bill for your wisdom. Lastly to you all, thank you for your support, we could not operate without you. As I have said on a number of occasions, If you like what we do, please make the Society known to your friends and neighbours. They might just have an interest in History, which they have not yet explored. Thanks for filling this venue on a number of occasions over the past year.

Thank you once again and I hope the Society will continue from strength to strength as we continue in 2025 into 2026.

Matt Herbison (Chairman/Trustee)



Josephine Herbison

Josephine Herbison (Secretary/Trustee)

Date 27/05/2025