

**BELLAGHY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
TRUSTEE REPORT
2022 - 2023**

Establishment and Objectives

Bellaghy Historical Society is a voluntary organisation, established in 2000 to promote education, knowledge and understanding of local, national and international history.

This objective is achieved through

- The provision and promotion of equal opportunities for the membership for activities undertaken by the Society regardless of religious belief, political opinion, race, age, marital status or sexual orientation, men and women generally, persons with a disability and persons without and persons with dependents and persons without;
- The pursuance of original research that is made available to all;
- The sharing of information amongst the members of the Society so as to add to the body of knowledge;
- The organisation of talks and other educational events that will provide members and the general public with relevant information, knowledge or skills to pursue individual or group research;
- Developing and delivering a programme of talks and activities on topics relevant to the history of the area of Bellaghy, Ireland and worldwide but with a particular focus on historical events and characters that have impacted on the locality of Bellaghy and its people;
- Building a local archive of documents (or photocopies of documents), illustrations and artefacts relating to the local history of Bellaghy and the surrounding area;
- Arranging guided local history walks in Bellaghy and surrounding area;
- The collection and recording of oral histories;
- Mounting exhibitions of an historical nature;
- Creating and maintaining an internet Bellaghy Historical Society website;
- The publication of a range of books, leaflets and resource materials relating to the local history of the area;
- Acting as a resource for material and information for schools, libraries, media, museums etc;
- Engagement with any and all other organisations from the Bellaghy area and surrounding district that have a shared interest in the promotion of the area, it's history and people;
- The extension of any of the above and developing additional activities as opportunities arise.

Activity

The Society meets on the second Tuesday of each month between October and May in the Old School House, Castle Street, Bellaghy when guest speakers are invited to present to members on a varied range of topics of historical interest.

Due to the Covid pandemic, there was no activity from March 2020 until October 2022.

Society Secretary (Ciara Ni Gabhan) resigned from the role in April 2022 due to family and work commitments.

The Chairperson of the Society (Seamus McErlean) took on the role of Secretary as an interim measure until an appointment could be made at an AGM (scheduled May 2023).

In August 2022, Committee Member (Margaret Evans) resigned from her role on the committee as she had moved to live elsewhere.

Committee Member (Phil Scullion) resigned from her role on 11th October 2022 due to family commitments.

A full programme of lectures was drawn up by the Chairperson for the 2022-23 season (see below for details)

The AGM is held in May of each year however, due to Covid restrictions, this was not possible in May 2022. The existing Committee (elected May 2019) remained in post and met on 23rd August 2022 (see below for details) in advance of the start of the 2022-23 programme.

The AGM of the Society was held on 16th May 2023. Minutes of that meeting are available for examination.

This report has been compiled on behalf of the Committee of the Bellaghy Historical Society by its chairperson Seamus McErlean



Seamus McErlean (Mr)
Chairperson
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BELLAGHY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2022 - 2023

October Tuesday 11th	A Brief History of Pandemics Seamus McErlean
November Tuesday 8th	From Aftergrass to Yellow Boots Maura Johnston
December Tuesday 13th	Pictures of Bellaghy Seamus McErlean
January Tuesday 10th	War of Independence, The Civil War and the Impact on Northern Ireland Clive Scoular
February Tuesday 14th	Archaeology of the A6 Road Scheme Jonathan Barkley
March Tuesday 14th	Church Island: 6 th to 21 st Century Thomas McErlean
April Tuesday 11th	The Spottiswoode Family of Ireland Roland Spottiswoode
May Tuesday 16th	Francis Joseph Bigger and the Irish Language Stiofán ÓDireáin

All talks to commence at 8.00pm, Old School House, Castle Street, Bellaghy

BELLAGHY HISTORICAL SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 23RD AUGUST 2022

Present

Seamus McErlean (Chair)
Pat Brennan (Treasurer)
Kathleen McKenna
Mary Craig
Ena Hammond
George McIntyre

Apologies

Margaret Evans (Seamus explained that Margaret had moved to live in Portstewart and would no longer be able to attend meetings)

1. Secretarial Support

Seamus and Pat updated members on the situation regarding the post of secretary. Ciara had met with Seamus and Pat earlier in the summer and advised that due to family and work commitments, she would no longer be available to take on the role of secretary.

ACTION: It was agreed that:

- Seamus would take over this role until a replacement was agreed (which may not happen until the next scheduled AGM in May 2023)

2. Venue

Pat informed members that the premises were now under new management and that there was a possibility of the meetings room no longer being available.

ACTION: After some discussion, it was agreed that:

- Seamus would explore the possibility of acquiring a room at (i) Homeplace, (ii) the Bawn or (iii) other centre locally
- Pat to discuss with members of the Bellaghy Development Group possible arrangements for the continued use of the existing facilities (including access to kitchen and toilet areas)

3. Bellaghy Historical Society Website

Seamus advised that despite the considerable efforts that had been put into the development of the website, it had not been maintained (notes of lectures had not been added and correspondence not answered or processed) and was as much as five years out of date.

Seamus indicated that the website was to be the flagship for the society and funding had been made available from the local council to develop it initially. He also advised that training had been provided by the web developer but that this had been ineffective for a number of reasons.

ACTION: It was agreed that:

- Seamus would speak to the developer and acquire a price for training and updating.
- Subject to costs, Seamus would seek permission from the committee to fund whatever was necessary to have the site fully updated and operational.

4. Financial Position

Pat provided detailed updates of expenditure (April to March for 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22) and fielded a number of questions from members.

There was discussion about the state of the accounts (£1453.53 at March 2022) which although significant, are unlikely to be enough to sustain activities for the longer term.

Members discussed admission costs and membership fees, the cost of venue and refreshments and the cost of speakers. The current economic climate was regarded as an important factor as all costs were rising.

Suggestions for fund raising included:

- Re-publication of the booklet 'Life in the Past' although it was noted that there may not be sufficient funding to publish 800 copies and even if the decision to publish went ahead, it would take a considerable length of time to sell that many books and realise the profits. Furthermore, many people would not want to purchase a book that did not include major updates (that would require considerable re-writing and new writing).
- Funding may be available from the Council but the committee would have to be very explicit about what the funding was to be used for.

ACTION: After discussion about membership fees and admission costs, it was agreed that as a first step:

- The membership fee (£5 p/a retired members and students and £10 for members in employment) will be abolished and a single admission fee of £3 will be charged (currently the admission fee is £1)

5. Book 'We Remember...Bellaghy'

Seamus received copies of a booklet (collated by the poet and writer Maura Johnston) entitled 'We Remember...Bellaghy: Memories of Bellaghy as told by Local People in their own Words' from Sean Henry (Mid-Ulster Council) during the initial lockdown period. Sean had asked if these could be distributed to members of the Society.

Copies were distributed to those present and the remainder will be distributed at the first scheduled event of the Society on Tuesday 11th October 2022.

6. Lecture Programme 2022-23

Seamus circulated the lecture programme for 2022-23 to members and took them through the plans for the various talks and presenters. Members expressed their satisfaction with the range of speakers and content.

Distribution of the programme to members will be challenging, in terms of (i) travel costs to physically deliver the programme, (ii) postage costs and (iii) due to gaps in the membership list.

The programme has already been emailed to some members and members were able to take some copies for circulation to members with whom they would be in contact.

Seamus has developed a 'membership form' and proposed that everyone attending lectures or wishing to be included in receiving information about the programme or activities, should complete same. The form includes a request for an email address. All communication should be by email going forward.

ACTION: Seamus will:

- Speak to Richard about the development and erection of posters.
- Find contacts for the three churches so that details of lectures can be added to church bulletins or given as announcements at services.

7. Setting Up Facilities

Ena requested assistance with setting up the venue in advance of lectures. Kathleen, Mary and Seamus agreed to help.

The key to the property can be accessed at Muldoons