

**Bellaghy Historical Society**  
**Annual General Meeting (Minutes)**  
**Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

Chairperson / Secretary, Seamus McErlean, opened the meeting by welcoming members present and offered a particular welcome to new members and friends from other local Historical Societies.

He offered condolences on behalf of members of the Society to Richard Keenan (Committee Member) on the passing of his brother Peter.

Seamus informed members of upcoming historical lectures at The Loup Heritage and Historical Society (Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2025) and at Ballinascreen Historical Society (Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2025)

At this was the last meeting of the Society for the 2024/25 season, the Annual General Meeting (AGM) had to take place in accordance with the Constitution of the Society. Members had been notified in advance that the AGM was to take place at this meeting as per the requirements of the Constitution.

The guest speaker for the evening, Ms Stephanie Lavery, was invited by the Chairperson to preside over the formal process of the AGM (the elections of Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and Committee members).

There were 18 members of the Society present at the meeting and all were eligible to take part in the election process.

Ms Lavery invited Mr McErlean to present the Chairperson / Secretary's report.

**Chairman / Secretary's Report**

As the posts of Chairperson and Secretary are both held by Mr McErlean, these two reports are being presented as a single report.

Mr McErlean noted that the AGM usually took place in May each year but reminded members of the decision by the Committee to reduce the number of meetings during the season from eight to seven subsequently this AGM was, as per the Constitution of the Society, taking place in April.

Copies of the minutes of the AGM (2024) were made available to members (hard copies and / or electronic copies are available on request from the Chairperson).

Mr McErlean thanked members for their attendance and support throughout the season and thanked members of the Committee for all the work that goes on behind the scenes (erecting posters, preparing refreshments, managing finances, communications and publicity) to ensure the smooth running of the Society and the delivery of the programme of lectures.

The Committee met on two occasions during the year:

- 13<sup>th</sup> August 2024 - to review the 2023/24 programme and develop the 2025/26 programme, receive an update on funding, to discuss the development and launch of the new website, receive an update on collaborations with colleagues at Seamus Heaney HomePlace regarding the delivery of an event to share information from a recent archaeological find at Newferry (bog body) and provide 'training' to Committee members on the operation of the Society so that, in the absence of an Office Holder, other members of the Committee could step-in and ensure the smooth running of events. It was agreed at this meeting that the number of lecture events each season would be reduced from 8 to 7 (October to April) and that the AGM would now take place at the April meeting each year.
- 19<sup>th</sup> November 2024 - this meeting was a continuation of the meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> August 2024 insofar as it was scheduled to discuss and clarify the roles of members of the Committee

In order to save time, Mr McErlean said that he would not go through the lecture programme in detail but asked members to provide him with feedback on the programme and suggestions / ideas for future speakers / lecture topics.

Mr McErlean thanked Ms Sally-Ann Diamond (St Mary's RC Church) for including details of the Society's lectures in the parish bulletin. Mr McErlean also noted that although he had not been able to establish a similar contact with the local Protestant Churches, he was encouraged by the increasing numbers of people from the Protestant community who were attending various lectures and hoped that this trend would continue.

Mr McErlean referred to the relationships with other local Societies (particularly The Loup, Ballinascreen and Portglenone) and noted that these relationships had continued to grow over the past year to the mutual benefit of each of the Societies.

Mr McErlean expressed particular thanks to George McIntyre and Linda O'Boyle for their work in developing the new Banner Stand, the website and the publicity around the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations of the Society. Members were informed that they would learn more about the new website at the first meeting of the Society in the 2025/26 season.

Mr McErlean expressed his gratitude to colleagues at Seamus Heaney HomePlace, particularly Ms Cathy Brown who following a meeting with Mr McErlean in January 2024 had made contact with various individuals / agencies (academic, heritage, archaeological, forensic science and literary) and organised a four-day event at HomePlace in February 2025 on Bog Bodies. This event had been inspired by the discovery of ancient human remains (Ballymacombs Mór Woman) near Newferry in October 2023.

Mr McErlean informed members that he would, within the following two weeks begin the process of re-registration with the Charity Commission and thanked Ms Josie McGuckin (CWSAN) for her help in previous years in completing this process.

Finally, Mr McErlean thanked Mr Pat Brennan for his expert help throughout the year in managing the financial affairs of the Society.

As there were no questions from the membership about any aspect of Mr McErlean's report, he handed back to Ms Lavery who invited Mr Pat Brennan to present the Treasurer's Report.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Copies of the Treasurer's Report (1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025) were made available to members (hard copies and / or electronic copies are available on request from the Chairperson).

Mr Brennan advised members that the balance in the account as at 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024 was £1809.55

Total Income 2024/25	£869.00*
Total Expenditure 2014/25	£979.36*

\* A detailed breakdown of income and expenditure figures can be made available on request

Account Balance at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 is £1717.19

There were no questions from members regarding the accounts and Ms Lavery moved to elections for the officer posts and members of the Committee.

### **Election**

As presiding officer, Ms Lavery announced all posts vacant and asked for nominations for the post of:

**Chairperson:** Seamus McErlean - proposed by Tony McGurk and seconded by George McIntyre. As there were no other nominations, the post was deemed filled.

**Secretary:** Seamus McErlean - proposed by George McIntyre and seconded by Tony McGurk. As there were no other nominations, the post was deemed filled.

**Treasurer:** Patrick Brennan - proposed by Seamus McErlean and seconded by Linda O'Boyle. As there were no other nominations, the post was deemed filled.

### **Committee Members:**

Seamus McErlean proposed, seconded by Tony McGurk that the previous committee be elected en-bloc (i.e. Kathleen McKenna, Ena Hammond, Richard Keenan, Peter McKenna, George McIntyre and Linda O'Boyle)

It was noted that two of those elected (Richard Keenan and Peter McKenna) were absent at the meeting however, Mr McErlean agreed to make contact with these members to ascertain if they wished to remain as members of the Committee. Failing their agreement, new members could be co-opted to the Committee

All four remaining members of the Committee agreed to retain their roles.

There being no further nominations, the posts of Committee members were deemed to have been filled.

That concluded the elections.

Seamus McErlean confirmed that the next AGM would take place on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2026 at 8.00pm in the Old School House, Castle Street, Bellaghy.

He informed members also that the first meeting of the new 2025/26 season would take place on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2025 in the Old School House, Castle Street, Bellaghy. The speaker would be Dr David Hume whose topic would be 'Scary Stories, Superstition and Beliefs.'

Mr McErlean informed Committee members that he would be in touch late July, early August 2025 to arrange a meeting of the Committee (to review the 2024/25 season and prepare for the 2025/26 season).

With the formalities of the AGM completed, Ms Stephanie Lavery (Living History Interpreter and Social Historian) gave a talk to members on 'Medieval Medicine.'