ULSTER HISTORY CIRCLE®

Annual Report and Accounts

2015-2016

Daniel J Lawton, U.S. Consul General unveils
the Circle's 200th Plaque at Bready, Co. Tyrone.

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Members of the Ulster History Circle 2015-2016

Officers:

Mr Chris Spurr	*Chairman*
Dr Myrtle Hill	*Vice-Chair*
Mr Alan Boyd	*Secretary*
Mrs Mairead Ferguson	*Treasurer*

Mr Peter Cavan	
Mr Paul Clements	*(from February 2016)*
Dr Peter Collins	
Sir Peter Froggatt	
Mr Richard Froggatt	*Editor, the Dictionary of Ulster Biography*
Mrs Maud Hamill	
Mr Liam Logan	
Mr Anthony Lundy	*(from March 2016)*
Mr Leslie McKeague	
Mr Trevor Parkhill	

This report covers the period from April 2015 to March 2016 and two plaques carried over to April 2016. There was a total of 11 committee meetings held and additionally, the Annual General Meeting took place in May.

A Background Note

The Ulster History Circle (the Circle) was founded over thirty years ago by James Hawthorne CBE, the Controller of BBC Northern Ireland. Observing how people of achievement were often commemorated elsewhere by plaques, he realised there was no universal scheme in place locally to celebrate those persons whose achievements had made a significant contribution to the history of Ulster. Mr Hawthorne considered there was an opportunity for a blue plaque programme and his inspiration created the Ulster History Circle. The first Circle plaque was to the artist William Conor and is on Stranmillis Road, Belfast, opposite Botanic Gardens.

Since this beginning in the early 1980s, the Circle has put up 200 plaques to celebrate achievers, in every county and city in Northern Ireland, and in many towns and villages too. There are five Circle plaques in the Republic of Ireland, two in Co Donegal, one in Co Monaghan and two in Co Cavan. Every year the blue plaque programme continues to expand, thanks to those who support its activities. There is no similar body within the whole island of Ireland doing what the Circle does. With no monies of its own, the Ulster History Circle relies on finance from outside funders, and its activities depend on the efforts of its members, a wholly volunteer working committee, which has a number limited by constitution, to twenty.

Annual Report 2015-2016 Foreword

The past year has seen the Ulster History Circle achieve a historic milestone of our own. Our 200th blue plaque was unveiled in April 2016. A total of twelve plaques were erected over the year, across six counties of Ulster, and in the cities of Belfast and Derry-Londonderry, including two plaques in Co Cavan, our first in that county. The twelve unveilings attracted hundreds of guests and dozens of dignitaries. The unveilings for Alexandrina Stewart and Oliver Pollock were both rescheduled from March 2016 and are included in this report.

The first plaque of the year to Cardinal Farley was unveiled by the outgoing US Consul General, and the final plaque, our 200th, to Oliver Pollock, was unveiled by the new incumbent, Daniel J. Lawton. The Circle has established constructive links with the US consulate in Belfast, and in recognition of this, a presentation of a replica souvenir plaque was made to Consul Gregory S. Burton before he left for his new posting in Washington DC.

Several plaque unveilings were important community events, including those for John Murphy Farley, Anne Jane Carlile, Robert Morrow VC, James Somers VC, Capt. Harry Hollywood, JG Devlin, David Herbison, Henry Montgomery, Margaret McCoubrey, and Oliver Pollock. Talks, exhibitions, readings and entertainment have been associated with many plaque events, and family members regularly play an important part in the commemorations, often participating in the unveilings. The First Minister, Arlene Foster, unveiled the plaque to Thomas Sinclair, and Heather Humphreys, the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, unveiled the Anne Jane Carlile plaque. Nine plaque unveilings were performed or attended by the first citizens, or their deputies, of different council areas.

Many plaque unveilings this year have been large scale events, and the Circle has become extremely adept at managing these. Often we enjoy a partnership with other bodies, to achieve an event which is successful for all. Examples of such partnerships in the past year have been with Creggan History Society; Trinity Presbyterian Church, Bailieborough; Newmills & District VC Group; Newry Maritime Association; Féile an Phobail; Dunmurry Non-subscribing Presbyterian Church; Sinclair Seamen's Presbyterian Church; the Ulster Historical Foundation, and Bready Ulster Scots group. In what is becoming an annual pattern, International Women's Day was marked by a Circle plaque to a woman of achievement. Another such, Baroness May Blood, unveiled the plaque to Margaret McCoubrey.

This year's plaque events have been well reported across the various media, and the 200th plaque, in Bready, Co Tyrone, attracted particular attention. The Ulster History Circle has a strong and established public profile, and is regarded as a heritage body of significance, both in Northern Ireland, and increasingly in the Republic of Ireland also. Our plaque programme always has several future projects planned, and the Circle welcomes new proposals, however, as we have no monies of our own, obtaining assured funding remains a major consideration, however appropriate a plaque suggestion might be.

None of the Circle's success could be achieved without the support of our volunteer members, who attend our busy monthly meetings, generously sharing their expertise and knowledge in order to help the Circle's work to progress. All these colleagues deserve the greatest of thanks for the efforts they contribute to our plaque programme, and elsewhere across our different outreach activities, which include giving talks to clubs and societies about our work. The many funding bodies for our plaques also warrant our thanks, for without them, we would cease to function. Belfast City Council and the Ulster-Scots Agency continue to be major supporters of our work, and thanks to Derry City and Strabane District Council, the Circle has put up our first plaque in the Maiden City for almost four years. The Circle is most grateful as well to those heritage groups and other individual bodies which have raised funds locally for blue plaques, and given generous support to many of our guest receptions after the unveilings.

The Dictionary of Ulster Biography represents another important part of the Circle's work, and its entries complement the persons commemorated by our plaques. However, the Dictionary is much broader than the plaque programme, and offers a rich and expanding base of entries, all written and edited in a voluntary capacity to an extremely high standard. The Dictionary has its own dedicated website, while our main Circle website is undergoing a period of development, and is due to appear as a fresh new website, with a new web address.

The Circle has made tremendous progress from our initial blue plaque in the early 1980s for the artist William Conor on Stranmillis Road, Belfast, to our 200th plaque in April 2016, in Bready, Co Tyrone, for the creator of the dollar sign. Selecting Oliver Pollock and Bready for our milestone plaque reminds people that the Ulster History Circle has a place as much in the smaller historic communities, as in the big cities. In devising the dollar sign, Oliver Pollock created a small symbol, which made a big impact. We hope our plaques do the same.

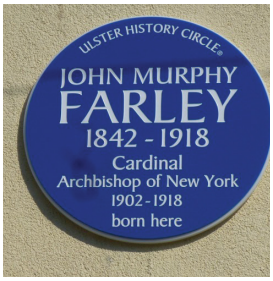
The Ulster History Circle enjoys a warm and universal degree of appreciation for its work, and continues to develop and thrive. Thank you once more to those who have supported the Circle over the past year, both with funding and in friendship, and thank you in advance to those who will do so in the future.

Chris Spurr, Chairman, May 2016.

The Blue Plaque Programme 2015 - 2016

Person Commemorated	Location of Plaque	Date of Unveiling	Unveiled by	Funding Body
John Murphy Farley (1842-1918) – Cardinal, Archbishop of New York	Newtownhamilton, Co Armagh	**2015** April 20th	Msgr Raymond Murray	Newry and Mourne District Council
Anne Jane Carlile (1778-1864) – Temperance Pioneer	Trinity Presbyterian Church Bailieborough, Co Cavan	May 8th	Heather Humphries TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	The Ulster-Scots Agency
Robert Morrow VC (1891-1915) – Soldier, Messines 12th April 1915	Farlough/Annaginny Road, Newmills, Co Tyrone	May 21st	Keith Morrow, great-grand nephew	The Ulster-Scots Agency
James Somers VC (1894-1918) – Soldier, Gallipoli 1st-2nd July 1915	Annagh Parish Church, Belturbet, Co Cavan	July 2nd	Sydney Cooper, nephew	The Ulster-Scots Agency
Harry Hollywood (1876-1954) – Master Mariner	Victoria Lock, Newry, Co Down	July 25th	Eddie Quinn, retired mariner	Newry Maritime Association
J G Devlin (1907-1991) - Actor	Falls Road Library, Belfast	August 3rd	Lord Mayor of Belfast, Cllr Arder Carson	Belfast City Council
David Herbison (1800-1880) – the Bard of Dunclug	Mill Street, Ballymena, Co Antrim	October 14th	Deputy Mayor of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, Cllr Timothy Gaston	The Ulster-Scots Agency
Henry Montgomery (1788-1865) – Minister, Teacher, Reformer, Founder the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster	Dunmurry Non-subscribing Presbyterian Church, Belfast	December 18th	Very Rev'd William McMillan, Minister Emeritus	The Ulster-Scots Agency
Thomas Sinclair (1838-1914) – Presbyterian, Liberal Unionist, Philanthropist	Sinclair Seamen's Presbyterian Church, Belfast	**2016** February 16th	Arlene Foster MLA, First Minister of Northern Ireland	The Ulster-Scots Agency
Margaret Taylor McCoubrey (1880-1956) – Suffragette, Pacifist, Labour Activist	Candahar Street, Belfast	March 10th	Baroness May Blood of Blackwatertown	Belfast City Council
Alexandrina McCausland Stewart (1865-1942) – Founder Londonderry Philharmonic Society and Derry Feis Ceoil	Crawford Square, Derry-Londonderry	April 4th	Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council, Cllr Elisha McCallion	Derry City and Strabane District Council
Oliver Pollock (1737-1823) – Merchant, American Patriot, credited with devising the Dollar Sign	Sollus Centre, Bready, Co Tyrone	April 14th	Daniel J Lawton, U S Consul General	The Ulster-Scots Agency

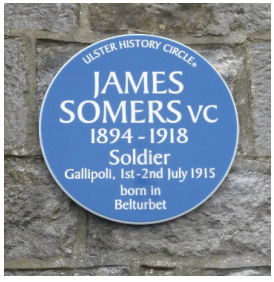
Twelve blue plaques were erected by the Circle throughout the year. Also, the plaque to Charles McKimm was removed from the Tropical Ravine in Botanic Gardens, to allow Belfast City Council to undertake restoration work and the plaque to Brian Desmond Hurst was removed from Ribble Street, Belfast, at the request of the property owner. Both plaques are in the safe keeping of the Circle and will be reinstated in due course.



Some of those present in Newtownhamilton, Co. Armagh, at the blue plaque unveiling to mark the achievements of Cardinal John Murphy Farley, Archbishop of New York.

Minister Heather Humphries TD and guests after the unveiling of a blue plaque to Temperance Pioneer, Anne Jane Carlile in Bailieborough, Co. Cavan.

Chris Spurr, Chairman of the Ulster History Circle with guests at the unveiling of a blue plaque to Robert Morrow VC in Newmills, Co. Tyrone.



Descendants of James Somers VC gather to celebrate the unveiling of his blue plaque at Annagh Parish Church, Belturbet, Co. Cavan.

Minister for Regional Development, Danny Kennedy MLA, the Newry Maritime Association and the Ulster History Circle celebrate the memory of Harry Hollywood, Master Mariner, at Victoria Lock, Newry Co. Down.

Ulster History Circle

Financial Summary 2015 - 2016

Opening Balance 31 March 2015	**£6,734**		
Income		**Expenditure**	
Ulster Scots Agency	£16,000	Plaque Manufacture and Fitting	£6,580
Cavan County Council	£1,000	Postage, Printing and Stationery (2)	£273
Belfast City Council	£800	Administration (3)	£119
Newry Maritime Association	£630	Meeting Expenses (4)	£718
Féile an Phobail	£100	Accountancy Fees	£50
Other Income (1)	£290	Plaque Design	£640
		Internet and Website Charges	£579
		Insurance	£186
		Events (5)	£236
		Sundry Expenses	£130
Total Income	**£18,820**	**Total Expenses**	**£9,511**
Total Resources	**£25,554**		
Net Income	**£9,309**		
Bank Closing Balance 31 March 2016	£16,078		
Less uncashed cheques	£35		
Balance	**£16,043**		

(1) Gifts and Donations
(2) 2014-2015 Annual Report printing costs, paper and other items
(3) Printer ink, press releases, plaque certificates etc
(4) Room Hire and refreshments at monthly meetings
(5) Refreshments, photography and associated costs at plaque unveilings

Chris Spurr and Alan Boyd of the Ulster History Circle receive the blue plaque to Charles McKimm from contractors Hi Tec Signs, for safe keeping in November 2015, during restoration work by the City Council at Belfast's Tropical Ravine.

Proposing, Funding, and Achieving a Blue Plaque

An Ulster History Circle blue plaque unites a person with a location in their life, and the Circle carries out careful and extensive research into the site of each plaque. Street Indexes are checked over, site visits made, and owners and tenants consulted for permission to allow the plaque on their premises. These activities can take considerable time, especially when seeking permission to put up a plaque. The plaque wording is carefully chossen, invitations are designed and issued, and a person to unveil the plaque is invited. Guest speakers are arranged, as each unveiling is accompanied by a short talk on the person being honoured. Also, family members and representatives of professional bodies associated with the plaque recipent, are contacted and invited. The whole is carefully planned and co-ordinated, towards creating a single special event.

- a person must be deceased at least twenty years, unless they would have reached their 100th birthday by the date of the proposed plaque unveiling
- the person must be associated with Ulster (nine counties) by reason of birth, education, work, residence, or vocation
- the person should be acknowledged and recognised as having made a significant contribution to education, industry, commerce, science, arts and literature, international affairs or other calling anywhere in the world
- the person must have a building associated with them in Ulster: a place of birth, education, residence, work, or similar

A proposal for a plaque should contain the reasons for a person's nomination, a short biographical note, and a suggestion of where a plaque might be located. All proposals should also give an indication of how the plaque will be funded. The Circle has no funds of its own, relying on local authorities, businesses, organisations and individuals to pay for its plaques.

Each proposal is carefully considered by the Circle committee, and if accepted, it joins the list of prospective plaques. The list always has a considerable number of plaques pending, so a new acceptance can take considerable time to process. The Circle undertakes all the necessary work as outlined above in order to achieve the plaque unveiling, but can only undertake a plaque project when funding is agreed beforehand, and in place.

Proposals for plaques can be submitted to the Circle at: ulsterhistorycircle1@gmail.com

The Dictionary of Ulster Biography

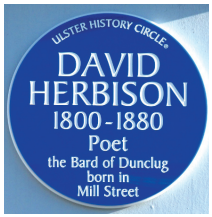
The Dictionary of Ulster Biography (*DUB*) has its origins in the published work (1993) of the same name, compiled by Kate Newmann. Its initial 1644 entries were digitised by the Circle in 2007, and form the basis of the present on-line *DUB*, which is edited, in a voluntary capacity, by the Circle to a very high standard. Many of the original entries now include additional details, and new entries are added every month, with the result that the *DUB* currently offers information on over 2100 people. By publishing on-line, the *DUB* benefits from regular updating, and there are many contemporary entries, for although a person must be deceased to be included in the dictionary, the 20-year delay related to blue plaques does not apply. The *DUB* contains biographical information on all the persons commemorated in the Circle's Blue Plaque Programme, including many of those people celebrated by the Circle's plaques in 2015-2016.

The *DUB* has the special advantage of being free for all to access, and is easily searchable. It is recognised as a valuable reference source, and the *DUB* website receives tens of thousands of visitors every year from across the world.

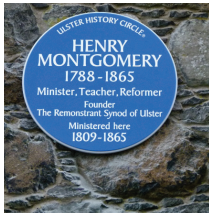
As with the Circle's plaques, the *DUB* concerns itself with persons born in, or strongly associated with Ulster. The Editor always welcomes suggestions for entries from new contributors, who will receive full acknowledgement of authorship, and copyright, although there is no payment made for entries.

The Editor can be contacted via the *DUB* website, which is at: newulsterbiography.co.uk

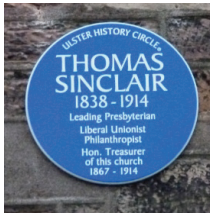
The extended family of J.G. Devlin with Cllr. Arder Carson, Lord Mayor of Belfast after the actor's plaque unveiling.



David Herbison, the Bard of Dunclug, honoured with a blue plaque in Ballymena, Co. Antrim



Representatives of the Ulster History Circle, Dunmurry Non-subscribing Presbyterian Church and the Ulster –Scots Agency after the unveiling of a blue plaque to Henry Montgomery.



First Minister, Arlene Foster MLA and Ian Crozier, CEO of the Ulster-Scots Agency join members of the Ulster History Circle, at the unveiling of a blue plaque to Thomas Sinclair at Sinclair Seamen's Presbyterian Church, Belfast.

Baroness May Blood joins Robert Heslip of Belfast City Council and Ulster History Circle members in Candahar Street, for the Margaret McCoubrey plaque unveiling.

Guests celebrate the unveiling of a blue plaque to Alexandrina McCausland Stewart in Derry-Londonderry.

ULSTER HISTORY CIRCLE

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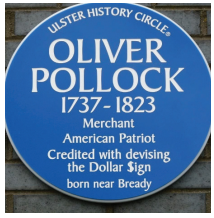

Ulster History Circle members celebrate their 200th plaque to Oliver Pollock with the US Consul General and Cllr. Elisha McCallion, the Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council.