ULSTER HISTORY CIRCLE®

Annual Report and Accounts

2016-2017

Robin and Michael Lewis celebrate the unveiling of an Ulster History Circle plaque
on Holocaust Memorial Day 2017
to their mother, Helen Lewis at the Crescent Arts Centre, Belfast.
Also pictured are: The Lord Mayor of Belfast, Ald. Brian Kingston and Rabbi David Singer.

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Members of the Ulster History Circle 2016-2017

Officers:

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

Mr Peter Cavan
Mr Paul Clements
Dr Peter Collins
Sir Peter Froggatt
Mr Richard Froggatt — *Editor: The Dictionary of Ulster Biography*
Mrs Maud Hamill
Mr Liam Logan
Mr Anthony Lundy
Mr Leslie McKeague
Mr Trevor Parkhill

This report covers the period from April 2016 to March 2017. There was a total of 11 committee meetings held and additionally, the Annual General Meeting took place in May prior to the regular monthly meeting.

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 the Ulster Museum.

Since this beginning in the early 1980s, the Circle has put up over 200 plaques to celebrate achievers, in every county and city in Northern Ireland, and in many towns and villages too. There are seven Circle plaques in the Republic of Ireland, three in Co Donegal, two 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.

Chairman's Foreword

After our landmark 200th blue plaque in April 2016, *The Ulster History Circle* has since unveiled a further sixteen plaques to the end of March 2017, across eight counties of Ulster, and in the city of Belfast. The unveilings attracted hundreds of guests and dozens of dignitaries.

On account of the centenary of World War One, and in particular the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, several of this year's plaques commemorated VC heroes. William McFadzean, Eric Bell and Robert Quigg all won the VC on July 1st, 1916. Other VC recipients commemorated during the year were Edward 'Barry' Bingham, the only Ulster-born sailor to win the medal in WWI; Thomas Hughes from Co Monaghan, and John Alexander Sinton, who uniquely won the VC and was elected Fellow of the Royal Society for his pioneering work on malaria.

As part of the Decade of Centenaries, the Circle unveiled a plaque to Francis Sheehy Skeffington in his home town of Bailieborough, Co Cavan. This was an important civic event, as were many other unveilings over the year. Twelve plaque unveilings were performed or attended by the first citizens, or their representatives, of different council areas, and family members regularly play an important part in our commemorations. Talks, exhibitions, readings and entertainment have been associated with most plaque unveilings, and thus have contributed significantly to community life.

Many plaque events have created a high public profile, and the Circle is acknowledged as being adept in managing these large scale events. Amongst our event partners this year were the Consulate General of the USA in Belfast; the Cavan 1916 Commemoration Committee; the Robert Quigg VC Commemoration Group; the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers Regimental Association; Co Donegal Historical Society; Newry and Mourne Museum; the Southern Health & Social Care Trust; Queen's University, Belfast; the John O'Connor Writing School; the Crescent Arts Centre, and Lissan Church of Ireland parish church. In what is now our annual pattern, International Women's Day was marked by a Circle plaque to a woman of achievement, VAD nurse Emma Duffin.

The year's plaque events have been well reported across the various media, and the plaque to Helen Lewis on Holocaust Memorial Day attracted particular attention. Our plaque programme always has several future projects planned, but 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 various outreach activities.

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 are due also to those regional councils across all Ulster which have supported our efforts this year. The Circle is most grateful as well to those heritage groups and other individual bodies which have raised funds locally, and have 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. It is due to appear with a fresh new look and will have a new web address.

Thank you once more to those who have supported *The Ulster History 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 2017.

The Blue Plaque Programme 2016-2017

Plaque Number	Person Commemorated	Location of Plaque	Date of Unveiling	Unveiled by	Funding Body
201	**James Holmes (1753-1832)** first U.S.Consul in Belfast	McHugh's Bar, Queen's Square Belfast	**2016** May 27th	Daniel J Lawton, U.S. Consul General	Belfast City Council
202	**Edward Barry Stewart Bingham VC (1881-1939)** Sailor, Battle of Jutland 31st May 1916	Bangor Castle, Bangor, Co. Down	June 1st	Alderman Alan Graham, Mayor of Ards & North Down and Tom Campbell, grandson	The Ulster-Scots Agency
203	**Frances Sheehy Skeffington (1878-1916)** Nationalist, Pacifist, Feminist, Socialist	The Library, Market House, Bailieborough, Co. Cavan	June 9th	Micheline Sheehy Skeffington, granddaughter	Cavan County Council
204	**Robert Quigg VC (1885-1955)** Soldier The Somme 1st July 1916	The Nook Restaurant (formerly the old schoolhouse), Causeway Road, Bushmills, Co. Antrim	June 28th	Jean Gibson, niece	The Ulster-Scots Agency
205	**Eric Bell VC (1895-1916)** Soldier, Thiepval, the Somme, 1st July 1916	Alma Terrace, Irivinestown Road, Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh	July 1st	Tom Elliott MP	The Ulster-Scots Agency
206	**Sir Crawford McCullagh (1868-1948)** Lord Mayor of Belfast who first called for a Silence of Remembrance July 1916	Abbeydene House, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim	July 5th	Susan Cunningham, great-granddaughter	Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council (Somme Commemoration Committee)
207	**Captain Jack (John Wallace) Crawford (1847-1917)** The Poet Scout	The Diamond, Carndonagh, Co. Donegal	October 1st	Maura Harkin, local historian from Inishowen	The Ulster-Scots Agency
208	**Ada Bodart [Anna Maria Doherty] (1874-1936)** Heroine, WWI	William Street, Newry, Co. Down	October 11th	Cllr. Róisín Mulgrew	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Michael McKeown, Pres. Newry Chamber of Commerce & Trade, Cllr Arder Carson, Lord Mayor of Belfast, Daniel J. Lawton, U.S. Consul General, Chris Spurr, Chairman UHC and Stephen McCully, Chairman NI Chamber of Commerce & Industry at McHugh's Bar, Belfast.

Ian Crozier, CEO the Ulster-Scots Agency, addresses guests at the unveiling of the plaque to Barry Bingham VC at Bangor Castle, Co. Down.

Dr Micheline Sheehy Skeffington, granddaughter of Francis Sheehy Skeffington with representatives of Cavan County Council and Ulster History Circle members.

The Blue Plaque Programme 2016-2017

Plaque Number	Person Commemorated	Location of Plaque	Date of Unveiling	Unveiled by	Funding Body
209	**Elizabeth Gould Bell (1862-1934)** Physician, Suffragist	Daisy Hill Hospital, Newry, Co. Down	October 11th	Sir Peter Froggatt MD Former Vice-Chancellor QUB Belfast	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
210	**Arthur Edmund [AE] Muskett (1900-1984)** Plant Pathologist, Mycologist, Broadcaster	Elmwood Avenue, Belfast	October 25th	Dame Mary Peters CH DBE, former Olympic athlete	Belfast City Council
211	**John O'Connor (1920-1959)** Writer	Banbrook Hill, Armagh	November 3rd	Cllr. Garath Keating Lord Mayor of Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Council	Armagh History Group and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
212	**William F McFadzean VC (1895-1916) –** Soldier The Somme 1st July 1916	'Rubicon', Cregagh Road, Belfast	November 11th	Nigel McFadzean great-nephew	The Ulster-Scots Agency
213	**Helen Lewis (1916-2009) –** Dancer, Choreographer, Writer, Holocaust Survivor	The Crescent Arts Centre, University Road, Belfast	**2017** January 27th	Alderman Brian Kingston Lord Mayor of Belfast	Belfast City Council
214	**Thomas Hughes VC (1885-1942) –** Soldier Guillemont, the Somme 3rd September 1916	Hope Castle Estate, Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan	February 17th	Heather Humphreys TD Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs	The Ulster-Scots Agency
215	**Emma Sylvia Duffin (1883-1979) –** VAD Nurse WWI and WWII Diarist, Book Illustrator	29 University Square, Belfast	March 8th	Emma Mackin great-niece	Belfast City Council
216	**John Alexander Sinton VC FRS (1884-1956) –** Soldier, Mesopotamia 1916, Physician, Malariologist	Lissan Church of Ireland Parish Church, Cookstown, Co. Tyrone	March 28th	Nial Watson grandson	The Ulster-Scots Agency

Chris Spurr, Chairman Ulster History Circle thanks Jean Graham, niece of Robert Quigg VC, while Ian Paisley MP looks on.

Jack Dunlop, Lynda Jones (resident), Tom Elliott MP and Chris Spurr, Chairman Ulster History Circle at Alma Terrace, Enniskillen.

Susan Cunningham, great-granddaughter of Sir Crawford McCullagh at Abbeydene House.

Ulster History Circle

Financial Summary 2016-2017

Opening Balance
31 March 2016 **£16,043**

Receipts	
Belfast City Council	£2,620
Newry, Mourne and Down D.C.	£2,000
Antrim & Newtownabbey D.C.	£800
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon B.C.	£800
Derry City and Strabane D.C.	£800
Fermanagh & Omagh D.C. & Ferm.Trust	£800
Foras na Gaeilge	£800
Patrick O'Connell Memorial Fund	£800
US Consulate	£400
Total Grant Income	**£9,820**
Other Donations/Income	**£95**
Total Income	**£9,915**

Payments	
Plaque Manufacture and Fitting	£11,776
Plaque Design	£720
Meeting Expenses	£932
Events	£523
Administration	£402
Printing and Stationery	£340
Insurance	£202
Internet Charges	£174
Accounting	£50
Other	£70
Total Expenditure	**£15,189**
Net Expenditure	**£5,274**

Statement of Assets/Liabilities

Opening Resources	**£16,043**
Net Expenditure	**£5,274**
Net Assets carried forward	**£10,769**

Represented by:
Balance per Bank Statement
31st March 2017 **£11,574**

Uncashed Cheques	**£806**
Net Bank Balance	**£10,769**

Maura Harkin (third from right) with members of the Colgan Hall Heritage and Community Association, Carndonough.

Rory McEvoy, Paul Madden (Madden Gallery), Cllr Roísín Mulgrew, Chris Spurr (Ulster History Circle), Francis Gallagher (Old Newry Soc), Robert Whan (Newry & Mourne Museum).

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 chosen; invitations are designed and issued; a person to unveil the plaque invited; guest speakers arranged, as each unveiling is accompanied by a talk on the person being honoured, and family members, as well as members of professional bodies associated with the plaque recipient, 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.
- The Circle's plaques are to persons of achievement and do not commemorate buildings, places, organisations or movements.

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, and relies on such as 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 3000 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 2016-2017.

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 a www.newulsterbiography.co.uk

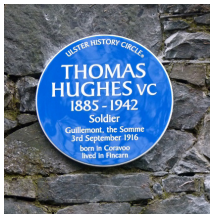
Chris Spurr, Chairman UHC, Cllr. Roísín Mulgrew, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, Dr Raymond Mullan, Shelagh-Mary Reid and Sir Peter Froggatt.

Back Row: Prof. Patrick Johnston,Vice-Chancellor QUB, Dame Mary Peters CH DBE.
Front Row: Bryan Muskett, son and Doreen Muskett, daughter of Arthur Muskett.

Lord Mayor, Cllr Garath Keating with Dr Myrtle Hill, Vice-Chair UHC and invited guests.

Nigel McFadzean with Ulster History Circle members and guests at the unveiling of his great-uncle's plaque at 'Rubicon' his former home in east Belfast.

The Lord Mayor of Belfast, Ald Brian Kingston addresses a large gathering of guests after unveiling the Ulster History Circle plaque to Helen Lewis, Holocaust Survivor.



Heather Humphreys TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs unveils the plaque to Thomas Hughes VC, while his family and other guests look on.

Trevor Parkhill MBE, Emma Mackin and Sarah Bracher, great-nieces of Emma Duffin.

Meta Bell DL, the Rev'd Alan Cross, Rector, Trevor Wilson, Chairman Mid-Ulster Council, Nial Watson, grandson of Brig. Sinton VC, Ian Crozier CEO Ulster-Scots Agency, Col Neil Salisbury DL, President Royal British Legion NI. and Chris Spurr of UHC.