ULSTER HISTORY CIRCLE®

Annual Report and Accounts

2018-2019

Cllr. Emmet McDonough-Brown (centre) receives a replica Los Angeles Street Sign named after William Mulholland from Tom LaBonge, a former L.A. City Councillor who unveiled the Mulholland Plaque at St. Patrick's Church in Donegall Street, Belfast on 25th March 2019.

Also pictured (left - right): Chris Spurr, Chairman, Ulster History Circle, the Rev'd Fr. Eugene O'Neill, Administrator, St. Patrick's Church and Stephen Stewart, Greeninc. TV

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Members of the Ulster History Circle 2018-2019

Officers:

Mr Chris Spurr	*Chairman*	
Dr Myrtle Hill	*Vice-Chair*	*(Resigned as Vice-Chair May 2018)*
Mr Paul Clements	*Vice-Chair*	*(from May 2018)*
Mr Alan Boyd	*Secretary*	*(Resigned as Secretary May 2018)*
Mrs Maud Hamill	*Secretary*	*(from May 2018)*
Mrs Mairead Ferguson	*Treasurer*	
Mr Peter Cavan	*(Resigned April 2018)*	
Dr Peter Collins		
Mr Richard Froggatt	*Editor: The Dictionary of Ulster Biography*	
Mr Liam Logan		
Mr Anthony Lundy	*(Resigned March 2019)*	
Mr Leslie McKeague		
Mr Brian McKeown		
Mr Trevor Parkhill		

This report covers the period from April 2018 to March 2019. There was a total of 10 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, the then 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 mid 1980s, the Circle has put up 240 plaques to celebrate achievers, in every county and city in Northern Ireland, and in many towns and villages too. There are nine Circle plaques in the Republic of Ireland, four in Co. Donegal, two in Co. Monaghan and three 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 2018-2019 Foreword

Towards the end of March 2019 the Ulster History Circle unveiled our 240th blue plaque, the ninth in this past year. Our plaque unveilings have attracted hundreds of guests and dozens of dignitaries, and over the year the Circle has commemorated persons renowned for their achievements across mathematics and aeronautics; astronomy and mathematics; theatre and film; sculpture and medicine; engineering and invention; piping and pipe making; singing stardom; business and entrepreneurship, and civil engineering and aqueduct design. One plaque removed temporarily has also been reinstated.

Amongst those supporting our events this year were Mid Ulster District Council; Derry City and Strabane District Council; Abbey Historical Society; Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council; the Ulster-Scots Agency, and Belfast City Council. The Circle extends our grateful thanks to all our supporters and funders.

Many plaque unveilings have benefited from a high public profile, and the Circle is regularly credited for our adept and skilful management of these large scale events, and also for achieving extensive coverage for them across broadcast and print media and online. Six of the Circle's plaques this year had either the first citizen of the council area or their deputy invited to unveil the plaque, or present as a principal guest.

Community involvement with our plaques is significant, and the plaque to Edgar Harper was supported by Dungannon History Forum and Donaghmore Historical Society; the Abbey Historical Society championed the Stephen Boyd plaque; the William Kennedy unveiling was part of the programme of the eponymous piping festival in Armagh, and the Greater Village Regeneration Trust assisted the Ruby Murray plaque event. The commemorations of Annie Russell Maunder, Stephen Boyd, Anne Acheson, Rex McCandless, Ruby Murray and Bridget Desmond all had family members attending the events, and in many cases performing the honour of unveiling the plaque. In a first for the Circle, a representative from Los Angeles made a roundtrip of over 10,000 miles to attend the William Mulholland plaque unveiling. Four of our nine plaques have commemorated women, and in our established pattern International Women's Day was marked by a Circle plaque to a person of achievement, the Donegal-born businesswoman and entrepreneur Bridget Desmond.

Our plaque programme has many future projects planned, but the Circle always welcomes new proposals. However, as we have no monies of our own, obtaining assured funding for each plaque remains a major consideration, however appropriate a proposal might be.

None of the Circle's success could be achieved without the support of our volunteer members, who attend our busy monthly meetings, there 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 both to our plaque programme and elsewhere across our various outreach activities. To discover more about our work, I encourage you to read the information included in this annual report, or to access our website.

Without the many funding bodies that support our work we would cease to function. The Circle is especially grateful to those heritage groups and other individual bodies which have given generous support to many of our guest receptions after the plaque 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. The Dictionary is much broader in scope than the plaque programme, and offers a rich and continually expanding base of entries, all written and edited in a voluntary capacity to an extremely high standard, and has its own dedicated website. Meanwhile the *Ulster History Circle* website continues in its development, and is available online for all to appreciate the breadth of our work over three decades and more.

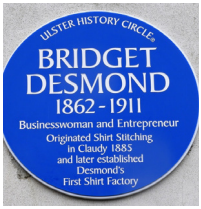
Once again it is my pleasure to thank those who have supported the *Ulster History Circle* over the past year, both with funding and in friendship, and to thank in advance those who will do so in the future.

Chris Spurr, Chairman, May 2019.

The Blue Plaque Programme 2018-2019

Plaque Number	Person Commemorated	Location of Plaque	Date of Unveiling	Unveiled by	Funding Body
114	**Charles McKimm (1848-1907)** First General Superintendent of Belfast Parks (1903-1907)	Tropical Ravine, Botanic Gardens, Belfast	**2018** (Reinstated after building restoration works) April 9th	(Originally unveiled on March 4th 2008) Edna Graham, great-granddaughter	Belfast City Council
232	**Edgar Henry Harper (1880-1916)** Mathematician, Aeronautical Theorist	3 Northland Place, Dungannon, Co. Tyrone	May 2nd	Mark Glasgow, Deputy Chair of Mid Ulster District Council	Mid Ulster District Council
233	**Annie Russell Maunder (1868-1947)** Mathematician, Pioneering Astronomer	37 Patrick Street, Strabane	May 21st	Maoliosa McHugh, Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council and Dorrie Giles, great-granddaughter of Walter Maunder	Derry City and Strabane District Council
234	**Stephen Boyd (1931-1977)** Stage and Screen Actor Messala, 'Ben-Hur', 1959	292 Shore Road, Whitehouse, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim	July 4th	Tony Corbett, son of actress, Valerie Corbett and Vikki Dundas, Abbey Historical Society	Abbey Historical Society
235	**Anne Crawford Acheson (1882-1962)** Sculptor, Pioneer Designer, Papier- mâché Splint, WW1	First Presbyterian Church, Bridge Street, Portadown, Co. Armagh	September 27th	The Rev'd John Faris, great-nephew	The Ulster-Scots Agency
236	**Rex (Richard) McCandless (1915-1992)** Engineer and Inventor Featherbed Motorcycle Frame, 1949 Developer of Gyroplanes	W.A.C. McCandless (Engineering) Ltd., Limestone Road, Belfast	October 25th	Jeremy McWilliams, motorcycle road racer	The Ulster-Scots Agency
237	**William Kennedy (1768-1834)** Uilleann Piper and Pipe Maker	Montagu Arms Hotel, Church Street, Tandragee, Co. Armagh	November 16th	Cllr. Julie Flaherty, Lord Mayor, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and Brian Vallely, Director Armagh Pipers' Club	Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
238	**Ruby Murray (1935-1996)** Singer 5 Hit Singles Top Twenty Chart 18th March 1955	Greater Village Regeneration Trust, 337 Donegall Road, Belfast	**2019** February 15th	Tim Murray, son Julie Murray, daughter	Belfast City Council
239	**Bridget Desmond (1862-1911)** Business Woman and Entrepreneur Originated Shirt Stitching in Claudy 1885 Established Desmond's First Shirt Factory	The Diamond Centre, 630 Baranailt Road, Claudy, Co. Londonderry	March 8th International Women's Day	Sir Denis Desmond KCVO CBE, grandson	Locally Funded
240	**William Mulholland (1855-1935)** Civil Engineer, Designer Los Angeles Aqueduct 1913	201 Upper Donegall Street, Belfast	March 25th	Cllr. Emmet McDonough-Brown, Deputy Lord Mayor of Belfast	Belfast City Council

The Blue Plaque Programme 2018-2019



Sir Denis Desmond KCVO CBE unveils his grandmother's plaque at the Diamond Centre in Claudy, Co. Londonderry.

Sir Denis Desmond KCVO CBE and his extended family gather below the plaque to their ancestor, Bridget Desmond at the Diamond Centre in Claudy, Co. Londonderry.

Tim and Julie Murray who unveiled their mother Ruby Murray's plaque on the Donegall Road in Belfast, near to her birthplace.

Tim and Julie Murray with writer, Michael Cameron whose play about Ruby Murray's extraordinary life premiered in Belfast, coinciding with the unveiling of her blue plaque.

Tim and Julie Murray are interviewed by local journalists, Claire McNeilly (centre), Belfast Telegraph and Suzanne McGonagle (foreground), Irish News.

Guests gather at No. 3 Northland Place, Dungannon, Co. Tyrone to celebrate the unveiling of the Edgar Harper plaque.

Guests at the Edgar Harper plaque event: (left-right) Patricia Bogue, Donaghmore Historical Soc., Ernie Cromie, Ulster Aviation Soc., Cllr. Mark Glasgow, Deputy Chair Mid Ulster District Council, Chris Spurr, Chairman, Ulster History Circle, Aidan Fee, Dungannon History Forum, and Christine Magowan, Arts and Culture Development Officer, Mid Ulster District Council.

Cllr. Maoliosa McHugh, Mayor of Derry and Strabane District Council (right) with Dorrie Giles, great-granddaughter of Walter Maunder about to unveil the plaque.

(left-right) Prof. Michael Burton, Armagh Observatory and Planetarium Director, Dorrie Giles, great-granddaughter of Walter Maunder and Dr. Sinead Farrell, climate scientist working with NASA, at the post-unveiling reception.

Ulster History Circle

Financial Summary 2018-2019

Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31st March 2019

Receipts		**Payments**	
Belfast City Council	£1,780	Plaque Manufacture and Fitting	£5,850
Personal Donations	£1,000	Plaque Design	£480
Derry and Strabane District Council	£1,800	Meeting Expenses	£836
		Events	£519
Total Grant Income	**£4,580**	Administration	£106
		Printing and Stationery	£298
Total Income	**£4,580**	Insurance	£560
		Internet Charges	£286
		Accounting	£50
		Other	£71
		Total Expenditure	**£9,056**
		Net Expenditure	**£4,476**

Statement of Assets/Liabilities

Opening Resources	**£12,606**
Net Expenditure	**£4,476**
Net Assets carried forward	**£8,130**
Represented by:	
Balance per Bank Statement 31st March 2019	**£8,165**
Uncashed Cheques	**£35**
Net Bank Balance	**£8,130**

Reinstated plaque

Jenny McBriar, Friends of Botanic Gardens and granddaughter of Charles McKimm with his commemorative plaque.

(left-right) Alex McNeill, BCC Parks Manager, May Graham, Friends of Botanic Gardens, Alan Boyd, Ulster History Circle and Jenny McBriar, granddaughter of Charles McKimm celebrate the reinstatement of her grandfather's plaque on the newly restored Tropical Ravine in Botanic Gardens, Belfast.

(left-right) Tony Corbett, son of actress, Valerie Corbett with Vikki Dundas of Abbey Historical Soc. after they unveiled the Stephen Boyd plaque.

Stephen Boyd's extended family celebrate his achievements with Cllr. John Smyth, Deputy Mayor of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council.

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 Circle's website is nearing the end of a period of significant improvement and redevelopment and can be accessed at: www.ulsterhistorycircle.org.uk

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 two thousand 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 2018-2019.

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 at the *DUB* website, which is at: www.newulsterbiography.co.uk

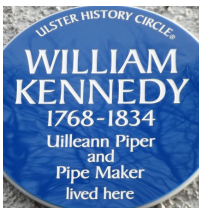
(left-right) Richard Hanna, Language and Education Director, Ulster-Scots Agency, Chris Spurr, Chairman, Ulster History Circle, Cllr. Julie Flaherty, Lord Mayor of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, the Rev'd John Faris, great-nephew of Anne Acheson, Heather Faris and Doug Beattie MLA.

Guests celebrate the Anne Acheson plaque unveiling outside the First Presbyterian Church in Portadown.

Terry Rafter on board his Norton *Featherbed* motorcycle, Mark Kennedy, Ulster Folk and Transport Museum with Trevor Parkhill and Chris Spurr, Ulster History Circle.

In Memoriam – the late Les Jennings presents a copy of his book *How to make a Better Mousetrap* to race ace Jeremy McWilliams who unveiled the Rex McCandless plaque.

Guests gather after the Rex McCandless plaque unveiling and chat together around the Norton *Featherbed* motorcycle



Cllr. Julie Flaherty, Lord Mayor of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and Brian Vallely, Director of the Armagh Pipers' Club jointly unveil the plaque to piper, William Kennedy at the Montagu Arms Hotel, Tandragee, Co. Armagh.

The Lord Mayor of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and Dr Myrtle Hill of the Ulster History Circle with Luigi Lai from Sardinia (front) and other pipers, (left-right) Eamonn Curran, Brian Vallely and Finlay MacDonald.

(left-right) Elizabeth Kennedy Trudeau, U.S. Consul General with Cllr. Emmet McDonough-Brown, Deputy Lord Mayor of Belfast celebrate the Mulholland plaque unveiling.

J.J. Tohill, film-maker with the Rev'd Fr. Eugene O'Neill, Administrator St. Patrick's Church, Donegall Street, Belfast.