# Annual Report and Accounts 2019-2020

**Joseph H. Thompson plaque**

**Pictured (left - right): Ian Crozier, Chief Executive Ulster-Scots Agency, Bernard Gilliland, American Legion, Samuel Hamilton, Kilmorey Arms Hotel, American Consul-General in Belfast, Elizabeth Kennedy Trudeau and Maynard Hanna, Kilkeel.**

Registered as a charity with the Charity Commission of Northern Ireland: NIC100124

## Contents:


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Members of the Ulster History Circle and a Background Note | page | 2 |
| Chairman's Foreword | page | 3 |
| The 2019-2020 Blue Plaque Programme | page | 4 |
| Images from the 2019-2020 Blue Plaque Programme | page | 5 |
| Financial Summary | page | 6 |
| Proposing, Funding and Achieving a Blue Plaque | page | 7 |
| The Dictionary of Ulster Biography | page | 7 |
| Further Images from the Circle's 2019-2020 Blue Plaque Programme | page | 8 |


## Members of the Ulster History Circle 2019-2020

**Officers:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Mr Chris Spurr | Chairman | |
| Mr Paul Clements | Vice-Chair | (Resigned January 2020) |
| Mrs Maud Hamill | Secretary | |
| Mrs Mairead Ferguson | Treasurer | |
| | | |
| Mr Alan Boyd MBE | | (Resigned April 2019) |
| Dr Peter Collins | | |
| Mr Richard Froggatt | *Editor: The Dictionary of Ulster Biography* | |
| Dr Myrtle Hill | | |
| Dr. Nuala McAllister Hart | | (from May 2019) |
| Dr David Hume MBE | | (from May 2019) |
| Mr Kenneth Irvine | | (from May 2019) |
| Mr Liam Logan | | |
| Mr Leslie McKeague | | |
| Mr Brian McKeown | | |
| Mr Trevor Parkhill MBE | | |
| Mr. Seamus McKee | | (February 2020) |

This report covers the period from April 2019 to March 2020. There was a total of 9 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 249 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 2019-2020 Foreword

Early in March 2020, the Ulster History Circle unveiled our 249th blue plaque, the ninth in the past year. The Circle had a further plaque unveiling planned for that month, but the Covid-19 emergency has necessitated the postponement of this event and any future unveilings until the situation changes. However, over the past year our plaque unveilings have attracted hundreds of guests and dignitaries, and the Circle has commemorated persons renowned for heroic achievements in WWI; scholarship in Ulster-Scots studies; philanthropy and culture; temperance endeavours; poetry and novels; astronomy; painting; engineering and invention, and the inception of Women's Institutes.

Amongst those supporting our events this year were the Ulster-Scots Agency; Derry City and Strabane District Council; Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council; Cushendun Building Preservation Trust and The Honourable The Irish Society; Belfast City Council, and Garvagh Women's Institute. The Circle is grateful both to the bodies who funded this year's plaques and to those groups and organisations which have given generous support to many of our guest receptions after the plaque unveilings.

All these unveilings have had a high public profile, and the Circle is renowned for our organisation of these large-scale events, which regularly achieve extensive coverage across broadcast and print media and online. Several 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.

Every plaque has its special element, and that to Joseph Thompson was distinguished by the American Consul-General unveiling a plaque to the only Ulster-born soldier to win the U.S. Medal of Honor in WWI. Family members came from Canada to celebrate Robert Gregg; comrades from his old regiment gathered to honour Ambrose Ricardo along with family and friends; the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland unveiled RJ. Patterson's plaque; Moira O'Neill was celebrated by a series of literary events centred around the plaque unveiling; the sequential plaques to three knights: Maclear, Lavery and Davidson, all created renewed awareness of these persons of achievement, and the community came together to commemorate Dorothea Florence Macausland, the latest woman of note marked by a Circle plaque for International Women's Day. Significantly, all nine of our plaque unveilings this year were honoured by the presence of family members taking part in the commemorations.

Our plaque programme has several future projects already planned, but the Circle always welcomes new proposals. However, as we have no monies of our own, if a proposal is considered appropriate, before it can progress further, funding from outside must be assured to the Ulster History Circle for every plaque.

None of the Circle's success could be achieved without the support of our volunteer members, who share their expertise and knowledge at our busy monthly meetings where our plaque programme is developed. Several new members have joined this year, and all colleagues deserve the greatest of thanks for their collective input. To discover more about our work, I encourage you to read the information included in this annual report, or to access our website.

The Dictionary of Ulster Biography represents another important part of the Circle's work and includes thousands of entries. The Dictionary is much broader in scope than our plaque programme, 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.

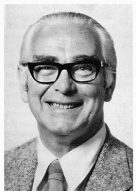
Alongside the Dictionary, the Circle's website is available online for all to appreciate the scope of our work across almost four decades.

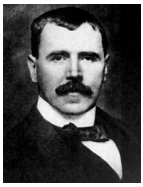
I thank all those who have supported the Ulster History Circle over the past year and thank in advance those who will do so in the future. Although exceptional circumstances have put a temporary halt to our plaque programme, the Circle remains ready to recommence our activities whenever this may be possible.

**Chris Spurr, Chairman, May 2020.**

## The Blue Plaque Programme 2019-2020

| Plaque Number | Person Commemorated | Location of Plaque | Date of Unveiling | Unveiled by | Funding Body |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **241** | **Joseph H. Thompson (1871-1928) Soldier U.S. Medal of Honor** | Kilmorey Arms Hotel 41 - 43 Greencastle Street, Kilkeel | May 23rd | Elizabeth Kennedy Trudeau, U.S. Consul - General, Belfast | The Ulster-Scots Agency |
| **242** | **Robert J. Gregg (1912-1998) Scholar, Linguist, Founder Ulster-Scots Studies** | Larne Museum & Arts Centre 2 Victoria Road, Larne | June 20th | Liam Gregg, son | The Ulster-Scots Agency |
| **243** | **Ambrose Ricardo (1866-1923) Soldier, Philanthropist** | Sion Stables Melmount Road, Sionmills | August 22nd | Celia Ferguson, great niece | Derry City and Strabane District Council |
| **244** | **R.J.Patterson (1868-1930) Founder - 'Catch My Pal' Temperance Association** | The Mall Presbyterian Church, Mall West, Armagh City | September 20th | Rt. Rev. Dr. William Henry, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church | Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council |
| **245** | **Moira O'Neill (Agnes Higginson Skrine) (1864-1955) Poet and Novelist** | Old Church Heritage Centre, Cushendun | October 19th | Sally Phipps, granddaughter | Cushendun Building Preservation Trust |
| **246** | **Sir Thomas Maclear (1794-1879) Astronomer Royal, Cape of Good Hope** | Newtownstewart Cenre 2000 Moyle Road, Newtownstewart | November 9th | Paul Maclear Great-great-great-grandson | The Ulster-Scots Agency |
| **247** | **Sir John Lavery (1856-1941) Artist** | St.Patrick's Presbytery 199 Donegall Street, Belfast | December 4th | Councillor Peter McReynolds, Deputy Lord Mayor, Belfast | Belfast City Council |
| **248** | **Sir Samuel Davidson (1846-1921) Inventor and Engineer** | First Presbyterian Church, Rosemary Street, Belfast | **2020** February 27th | David Bleakley Great grandson | The Ulster-Scots Agency |
| **249** | **Dorothea Florence Macausland (1888-1970) Formed first Women's Institute N.I. Garvagh 1932** | St. Paul's Parish Church, Main Street, Garvagh | March 6th | Miss Joanna Clark Great niece | Garvagh Women's Institute |





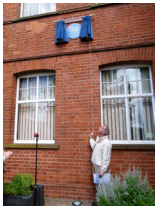
Pictured left to right: J.H. Thompson, R.J. Gregg, Ambrose Ricardo, Moira O'Neill, Sir John Lavery, Dorothea Florence Macausland.

# The Blue Plaque Programme 2019-2020

**Joseph H. Thompson plaque.**

Chris Spurr, Chairman Ulster History Circle, welcomes guests outside the Kilmorey Arms Hotel, Kilkeel.

Elizabeth Kennedy Trudeau, American Consul-General, Belfast unveils the plaque, watched by descendants of Joseph H. Thompson, Henry Reilly and Denise Reilly.



**Robert J. Gregg plaque.**

Liam Logan, Ulster History Circle, Councillor Maureen Morrow, Mayor of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council with Paul Clements Vice Chair, Ulster History Circle.

Liam Gregg, son of Robert J. Gregg, travelled from Canada to unveil the plaque to his father at Larne Museum and Arts Centre.

Liam and his wife Irene, celebrate the unveiling with family and friends.

**Ambrose Ricardo plaque.**

Celia Ferguson unveiling the plaque with Councillor Michaela Boyle, Mayor of Derry City & Strabane District Council, sponsor of the plaque.

Dr. Peter Collins, Ulster History Circle, speaks of the life, times and achievements of Ambrose Ricardo.

Celia Ferguson with friends and family including her brother Tony from Scotland, the Fraynes from Australia, and cousins from Ireland, the Shackletons and McFerrans families.

**R.J. Patterson plaque.**

The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, the Rt. Rev. Dr. William Henry, Rev. Gamble, Dr. Myrtle Hill, Ulster History Circle, Lord Mayor of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Councillor Mealla Campbell, and historian, Billy Scott.

The Moderator addresses the guests.

## Ulster History Circle

**Financial Summary 2019-2020**

**Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31st March 2020**

| **Receipts** | | **Payments** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ulster-Scots Agency | £4,000 | Plaque Manufacture and Fitting | (£5,784) |
| Belfast City Council | £1,600 | Plaque Design | (£400) |
| Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon BC | £800 | Meeting Expenses | (£832) |
| Derry and Strabane District Council | £1,000 | Events | (£414) |
| Garvagh WI | £1,000 | Administration | (£90) |
| Cushendun BPT | £800 | Printing and Stationery | (£263) |
| **Total Grant Income** | **£9,200** | Insurance | (£580) |
| Donations | £40 | Internet Charges | (£143) |
| | | Accounting | (£50) |
| | | Other | (£82) |
| **Total Income** | **£9,240** | **Total Expenditure** | **(£8,638)** |
| | | **Net Income** | **£602** |

**Statement of Assets/Liabilities**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Opening Resources** | **£8,130** |
| **Net Income** | **£602** |
| **Net Assets carried forward** | **£8,732** |

**Represented by:**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Balance per Bank Statement** | |
| **31st March 2020** | **£8,766** |
| Uncashed Cheques | (£35) |
| **Net Bank Balance** | **£8,732** |

**Moira O'Neill plaque.**

Sally Phipps, Moira O'Neill's granddaughter after she unveiled the plaque at the Old Church Heritage Centre, Cushendun.

Members of the Cushendun Building Preservation Trust Committee with the Skrine and Keane families, descendants of Moira O'Neill.

Chairman of the Ulster History Circle, Chris Spurr with UHC committee members, David Hume MBE, Nuala McAllister-Hart, Mairead Ferguson, Kenneth Irvine, Paul Clements and Liam Logan.

## 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 has undergone a significant improvement and redevelopment and can be accessed at: www.ulsterhistorycircle.org.uk

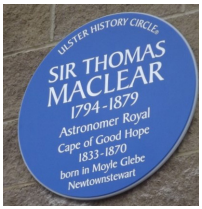
## The Dictionary of Ulster Biography

*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 2019-2020

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

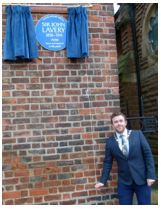


**Sir Thomas Maclear plaque.**

left to right –Joe McCormick, Chairman Newtownstewart Centre 2000, Mark Bailey, Emeritus Director, Armagh Observatory, Cassidy Maclear, great-great-great-great granddaughter, Paul Maclear, great-great-great grandson. Chris Spurr, Chairman, Ulster History Circle, Paul Clements, Vice-chairman, Ulster History Circle, Keelan Maclear, great-great-great-great grandson, Irene Spratt, Ulster-Scots Agency.

Paul Maclear, great-great-great grandson from Johannesburg and Amsterdam. Paul unveiled the blue plaque.

Sir Thomas Maclear's grave at the South African Astronomical Observatory campus, formerly the Royal Observatory, Cape of Good Hope.



**Sir John Lavery plaque.**

Guests gather outside St. Patrick's Presbytery, Donegall Street, Belfast.

Deputy Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Peter McReynolds unveiling the plaque.

The extended families of Sir John Lavery with Chris Spurr, Chairman Ulster History Circle, Father Eugene O'Neill, administrator of St. Patrick's Church and the Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Peter McReynolds.

**Sir Samuel Davidson plaque.**

David Bleakley, great grandson unveils the plaque.

The Bleakley families and guests celebrate the unveiling.

left-right. Terence Mills who nominated Sir Samuel Davidson, with former employees of the Sirocco who meet regularly and are known as the 'Sirocco Dinosaurs'.

**Dorothea Florence Macausland plaque.**

Miss Joanna Clark, great niece celebrating the achievements of her great aunt.

Guests and members of the Garvagh Women's Institute at St. Paul's Parish Church, Garvagh.

Helen Livingston speaking about the life and times of Dorothea Florence Macausland.