

# **PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IRELAND**

## **Trustees' Annual Report for the Financial Year 1 Jan — 31 Dec 2024**

### **Submission to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland**

**Charity Name:** The Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland (PHSI).

**Charity Number:** 101056

**Address:** Assembly Buildings, Fisherwick Place, Belfast BT1 6DW.

**Names of Trustees:** Rev Prof W Addley; Mr DW Alexander; Very Rev Dr M Barry (Chairman); Very Rev Dr G Brown; Very Rev Dr J Dunlop; Mr J Erskine; Rev T Gribben; Mr S Johnston; Rev J Lamb; Very Rev Dr J Lockington; Mrs A McCaughan; Dr T McCavery; Rev Prof R McCollum; Mr L McKeague; Mr J Moffett; Rev S Moore; Rev Dr J Nelson; Very Rev Dr D Patton; Dr W Roulston; Rev I Smith; Rev Dr D Steers; Miss M Stewart; Mrs J Taylor; Rev Dr R Tosh; Dr C Walker; Rev D Weir; Rev S Woodburn.

#### **Governance of PHSI:**

PHSI is governed by its Constitution which outlines how the Society is organised and managed.

#### **Structure and Management of PHSI:**

PHSI is managed by a Council whose members are either elected annually at the Annual General Meeting, usually in March or are appointed by the General Council of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The Society's Council in 2024 had a membership of 27, including ex officio, nominated and elected members, with 5 members constituting a quorum for the transaction of business. The office-bearers of PHSI include two Secretaries, and a Treasurer, who with the Chairman and the other members of Council, run the Society. The Council therefore has the responsibility for planning and carrying out measures in support of the Society's objectives. Day-to-day administration is carried out by a part-time Assistant Secretary/Librarian and Archivist. Minutes are kept of all meetings and full

accounting records are kept by the Treasurer, indicating the financial position of PHSI at any time during the financial year.

### **Purpose of PHSI:**

The purpose of the PHSI is to advance public education in the history of the Churches of the Presbyterian order in Ireland by various means, including the collection and preservation of historic materials and records of such churches. The founding churches were the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

### **Activities:**

The main activities of PHSI include: the delivery of a programme of lectures; the production of publications; assisting researchers in person, by telephone and by e-mail; fulfilling requests for publications; adding content to the PHSI website; and accessioning and cataloguing printed and archival material and artefacts into the Society's collections.

### **Achievements:**

The Society was able to provide a range of lectures during 2024 with these lectures covering a range of subjects of Presbyterian historical interest. Talks were given regularly to members as well as to church groups and local and family history societies. In addition to the regular lectures some informal events were organised and a field trip to the Mid and East Down area took place in June 2024. A number of publications were produced and well received by members of the society and other interested parties alike.

Many visitors from abroad, local researchers and PHSI members continued to make good use of the library and archive. While visitors are encouraged to become members, the Society's facilities and research assistance is equally available to non-members. Visits by researchers to the library and archive were facilitated during 2024 as well as answering emails and telephone calls relating to the history of Presbyterianism and Presbyterian churches, the careers of Presbyterian ministers and family history.

The PHSI website, one of the principal means of communicating with the general public, has again proved popular during 2024. The number of visits to the website during the year continued to increase (compared to 2023) while the number of Associate members who joined on-line in 2024 remained similar to that in the previous year. The website therefore remains an important means of attracting people to take an interest in the history of Presbyterianism and in helping people to trace their Presbyterian ancestors. New pages were also added to the website, especially with additional articles in the history section.

The Society continues to make good use of social media and by the end of 2024 there were about 1,300 *Facebook* followers. Information can therefore be disseminated widely which helps promote a greater understanding of Presbyterianism by the public.

The work of collecting and preserving archives, printed material, photographs, artefacts and other objects of historical interest for the Churches of the Presbyterian order continued throughout 2024. PHSI is grateful to those who have entrusted historical material to the Society's care.

Volunteering is an important aspect of the work of the Society which enables projects to be carried out which would not otherwise be possible. The Society's very committed group of volunteers continue to work effectively and we wish to record our thanks for all their work on our behalf.

#### **Public Benefit:**

Beneficiaries from the Society's work include not only PHSI members but the general public, both local and overseas. Visitors normally have free access to the facilities and benefit from the Society's resources, website and staff expertise and research knowledge. This includes research of family and local history, the history of individual churches, academic research and journalistic research. The beneficiaries from the activities of PHSI, mainly through on-line means this year, have gained improved knowledge and understanding of the history of Presbyterianism in Ireland and of individual congregations. They have discovered more of their Presbyterian roots and gained a greater awareness of the impact of Presbyterianism on society. These all help to fulfil the purpose of PHSI as set out

above. This benefit is apparent from the feedback from the general public and from the academic community who visit the PHSI library and archive to carry out relevant research, visit its website, attend lectures and outings, and purchase publications as well as from the number of on-line visits. These avenues ensure that the activities of PHSI advance public education in Presbyterian historical matters. The Trustees of the PHSI have complied with their duty to have regard to the Charity Commission's 'Public Benefit Requirement' statutory guidance. There is no private benefit arising from the purpose of PHSI.

### **Financial Review:**

An annual grant from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (£23,000 in 2024) represents the main source of funding for PHSI. Donations are also received from individual Presbyterian Churches, other churches of the Presbyterian order and from individuals. Membership income together with interest from bequests and sales of books and pamphlets make up the remainder. The main areas of expenditure include the cost of leasing and servicing the Society's premises, the salary of a part-time assistant secretary/librarian and archivist, the cost of printing and stationery, insurance and IT related expenditure. Overall, most of the expenditure items were of the same order as in the previous year with income also following the expected annual pattern. As a result, the Society's income matched its expenditure for the 2024 financial year.

### **PHSI Account:**

The PHSI account operated in credit for the whole of the financial year 2024, with the end of year balance being £48,206.

### **Report Authorisation:**

This report was approved for submission by the Treasurer on 21 March 2025.

Stephen Johnston  
Treasurer  
21 March 2025