

Friends of Columbanus Bangor Annual Report 2023

Prepared by the Chairperson Deborah Girvan

AGM 30 January 2023

1. Introduction

It has been another busy year for the Executive/ Events Team. The programme of events and activities has increased considerably over the past year which has put a lot of pressure on a small team of committed people to co-ordinate and organise visits, trips, walks, and events.

2. Membership

Membership continues to grow and I am pleased to report that we now have 55 members. This is an increase of 64% since January 2019.

3. Columbanus Leaflet

3,000 copies of the Columbanus leaflet were designed, printed and distributed. Thanks are extended to Maire Foley and Brigid Watson for writing the leaflet which has been critically acclaimed by the clergy, academics, and members. A further 3,000 leaflets have been reordered.

4. Grants 2022

FoCB was successful in being awarded total grants of £8,281.06

- Council Heritage Grant £500 Zoom and Columbanus leaflet
- Council Community Festival Grant £2,781.06 Columbanus Festival
- David Cross Foundation £5,000 CW Feasibility Study Co Down

4. Website

The new FoCB website was launched in February 2022. I want to pay tribute to FoCB member Charlie Reid for volunteering to design and set up the new website which is helping to promote FoCB and keep the legacy and heritage of Columbanus alive.

5. Columban Way Feasibility Study

With funding from the David Cross Foundation, a small team of volunteers was set up to walk and map the Columban Way in Co Down. FoCB members Cllr Cadogan Enright and Charlie Reid plus colleague Duane Fitzsimmons have been working on this project for the past nine months. The objective of the study is to produce a document of walking routes that will incorporate a long-distance walk from Armagh to Comber that can be branded as the Columban Way. Once completed, it will be presented to local Councils, government departments and tourism organisations. It is hoped that Councils will then be able to apply for funding to develop the route in their specific areas.

6. Visits and Events

- **18 -20 February 2022:** Official launch of the beginning of the Columban Way, Myshall, Co Carlow. Thanks to member Charlie Reid for representing FoCB at this important event.
- **25 March 2022:** Visit to the Livingston Centre, Killinchy Parish Church
- **25 March 2022:** £5,000 Cheque handover by Terry Cross at the Hinch Distillery
- **25 March 2022:** Meeting at Ards Arts Centre with CEO Ards and North Down Council and Jim Shannon MP to discuss development of Columban Way
- **1 April 2022:** Visit to Ulster Museum to attend a talk on the Clonmore Shrine. Thanks to FoCB member Barbara Boyle, a green badge tour guide, for organising and delivering the talk.
- **14 May 2022:** Book Launch of archaeological findings in France at St Comgall's Primary School, Bangor
- **3- 5 June 2022:** 12 members travelled to Carlow for the weekend to attend the Columbanus Walking Festival organised by the Myshall Friends of Columbanus

- **17 June 2023:** Guided walk for 30 people from Comber via Scrabo Tower to Movilla Abbey as part of the Columbanus Folk Festival organised by Ards CCE. Thanks extended to members Charlie Reid, Brigid Watson, Pat McNally, and Maire Foley for helping to organise this walk.
- **29 - 31 July:** Chairwoman Deborah Girvan represented FoCB in St Coulomb, Brittany, for the annual Columbanus Festival
- **5 September 2022:** FoCB welcomed a group of 25 Italians from Bobbio who were visiting Bangor to learn about Columbanus. We organised a mass in St Comgall's, a walk to Strickland's Glen and lunch with the Mayor in Bangor Castle
- **17 September 2023:** Visit to St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast. Thanks are extended to FoCB member Adeline Cully for organising the tour which also has links to Columbanus.
- **24 – 25 September:** 6 members of Myshall FoC visited Bangor for a weekend of Columbanus activities. The Myshall group had received funding from Irish government to co-ordinate a partnership programme of exchanges and visits with FoCB. Thanks to David Lennon for co-ordinating the programme.
- **29 September 2022:** Deborah Girvan attended the launch of Shared Island Funding in Cavan where the Taoiseach announced a grant of 250,000 Euros to develop the Columban Way on the island of Ireland.
- **8-9 October 2022:** Deborah Girvan, Charlie and Rachel Reid travelled to Carlow to participate in a walk along the River Barrow, a guided tour of St Mullins monastic site and attend a youth musical concert. This was the reciprocal visit as part of the partnership agreement with Myshall FoC
- **17 -20 November 2022:** Columbanus Festival weekend. 900 people participated in a series of events which included a drama production by Bangor Drama Club, Columbanus Talks, Columbanus Concert, Columbanus Walk, Calligraphy workshops, storytelling in local Primary Schools and a cross-community church service in St Comgall's Church

7. Priorities for 2023

- Continue to increase membership
- Publish and distribute 3000 copies of the 2nd edition of Columbanus leaflet
- Co-ordinate the launch of the Columban Way Feasibility Study Publication
- Participate in the Ards CCE Columbanus Folk Festival in June
- Appoint someone to manage social media
- Co-ordinate a visit to St Gallen, Switzerland, 7 -10 July 2023 to attend the launch of the Columban Charter partnership and the annual European Columban Day
- Co-ordinate a series of events throughout the year to educate and promote the legacy of Columbanus in Bangor and beyond
- Organise the annual Columbanus Festival in November 2023
- Apply for relevant grants to help run FoCB and organise events
- Set up Friends of Columbanus group in Enniskillen
- Welcome a group of 40 Friends of Columbanus from Brittany in September 2023

8. Thanks

I wish to thank the hard-working members of the Executive/Events team committee members: Vice Chair David Lennon; Roberta Dunlop, Treasurer; Brigid Watson, Secretary; Sharon Kayes, Education Officer; and committee members Maire Foley, Barbara Boyle, Adeline Cully, and Pat McNally. I would also like to thank Charlie Reid for managing and updating the website and organising walks, and Cllr Cadogan Enright for co-ordinating the Feasibility Study. And finally, I would like to thank the members of FoCB for their support and encouragement throughout the year