

Bayburn Historical Society – Secretary's Annual Report for 2023 -24

Following last year's AGM & Dinner, the Society enjoyed an outing to Portaferry in June, where we visited the Portico Arts & Heritage Centre, a beautiful church which once restored changed to a public venue with music of all types, but still has Christian worship on Sundays. Then followed a guided walking tour around the town by Brigid Watson, who provided us with ear pieces and audio devices, while she described the history of Portaferry, and the walk ended at the Ropewalk Maritime Heritage Museum, all most interesting. 19 Members attended.

Our new Season started in September with a fascinating talk by our then chairman, Robin Masefield on Irish administrators in 19th century China, Japan & Korea. His book on the subject was launched in August at various venues including Bangor Castle, & Queen's University. After his talk, Robin was presented with a gift token from the Society as he & his wife Rosemary bid us farewell to return to England to live. 25 members in attendance.

The talk in October by Mark Doherty, told of "Idalia" a motor launch built at Harland & Wolffe, an unusual venture for them. The vessel's subsequent launch and the misfortune of Idalia's owner. 19 members attended.

In November our speaker was John Witchell and his talk was entitled The Chronicles of Clandeboye. He showed on screen, ancient maps of how the landscape of Clandeboye and surrounding area had changed over the years. He is currently doing a Post Graduate Research on the area, and provided the first of a series of walks, with a narrative which was sent to all members with email, with the request that they would give feedback to him on the walks. 25 members attended.

In December, members attended the funeral of Mrs. Helen White, an Honorary Member, whose husband Stuart was one of the founder members of our Society. Helen was a remarkable lady who was interested in everything, and sadly missed.

The January meeting was postponed due to bad weather and only 8 members proposing to attend. And so we missed saying goodbye to Charles & Joyce Pople, another couple who moved back to England. The talk was rearranged for April, when we heard Moira O'Rourke on the Archaeology in North Down. Moira was an excellent speaker, who gave insight into the past, and the various people who came to live here, their habits and husbandry through the ages. 15 members attended.

Our February speaker was Peter Gibson, an enthusiast on the history of Groomsport, and we heard about the ship that set sail to the New World, but didn't make it, turning back to Groomsport and the Eagle Wings festival that is held each year, along with many other interesting facts. 22 attended.

In March we had Robert Bell from S D Bell & Co Ltd. The company, a family business celebrated 125 years in business back in 2012, originally opened as a grocery shop, then specialising in tea & coffee. Robert explained how coffee was first discovered, by a goatherd watching his flock and he noticed that when the goats ate the berries from a certain tree, they were very spirited and less inclined to sleep. Robert went on to cover the many varieties of coffee, and how the roasting of the beans makes the flavour. 17 members attended.

As a Society we enjoy hearing from the different speakers, and meeting socially over a cup of tea/coffee at the end of our speaker's talk and question and answer session. But we are an aging group and we need new members urgently. The committee must decide on the way forward, so that we can keep going.

