

# BANBRIDGE & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Secretary's report 2023/4

Our year started off in September with a most exciting illustrated talk on a hidden valley in south west Donegal. Christy Gillespie was anxious to locally publicise his wonderfully illustrated book on this haven of a place, only accessible by foot which attracted many famous folks to chill out. Christy's father in law was Billy Laughan, well known Dentist of this town.

In October we went back in time with Dr Glynn Kelso who is an expert on the origins of the area around the (new) town of Banbridge. Glynn pointed out that Loughbrickland had been a most important place in ancient times. The evidence of old Abbeys and of course the crannog. He showed some very ancient maps.

November talk brought to life the American Army HQ based in Brownlow House from 1942. David Martin was our speaker and he had various photographs and film of them arriving in Northern Ireland. He had some wonderful footage of an old veteran who returned just a few years ago and was honoured by the local council.

Christmas lunch was held on 14 December at Belmont Hotel and George Wilson provided a few songs and entertainment.

January talk was provided by Mrs Joy Smith who heads the ABC Family History Society. She and various members took on a project trying to elicit the history of folks who had lived early last century in the Brackagh area. Old plate photographs surfaced in an dilapidated country house, they were printed by specialists - this information used and a book was published.

Our own Geraldine Foley delighted us in February with her studies into the connection of Newry and Demerara. A local man James Blair had obtained large tracts of plantations and wrote home frequently describing his work there. His mother had retained these letters. A terrible insight to the slave trade and the riches that were acquired by slave owners.

Millhall estate outside Dromore with its famous ghost story was the March talk by Simon Walker, head of Dromore High School History Department. He amused us with various tales of the family who had resided here and of course the story of the ghost.

Our Chairman Geoffrey thought for a change we as members could bring in artefacts and describe them. Tables were placed around the room and folks went around learning what was being shown. Items dating back to 1600's and 1700's were on display as well as more modern items.

For May we have Jim Conway talking about local literary notable people and our AGM will be held.

Sadly we lost 2 of our Members during this past season, Miss Ella Browne and Sean McIlroy both in October 2023. They both had contributed much to our Society over the years and are sadly missed.

Thanks as always to everyone who helped with tea etc, and the wonderful Mrs Pat Hanna as Treasurer ably assisted by Geraldine our Vice Chair. It is a difficult job coping with members arriving just prior to the meeting and especially casual visitors. So much work goes on behind the scene too. Mrs Rose Middleton has been assisting with the Treasury post and we thanks her for her work too.

Geoffrey Davidson has done a wonderful job as our new Chairman and keeps our meetings interesting.

*Special thanks to Olive Rippen who bookkeeper  
as in this wonderful name for our meetings*

Florence A Chambers  
May 2024

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