



ABC Family History Association

Report of the Trustees for the Year Ended 30 June 2024

The Trustees of the Association are pleased to present their report for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024. In preparing this report the Trustees have had due regard to The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's Public Benefit statutory guidance.

Name of Association

ABC Family History Association, also known as ABCFHA

Meeting Place

Brownlow Community Hub
7 Brownlow Road
Craigavon
BT65 5DL

Governing Document

ABCFHA is an unincorporated association governed by a Constitution.

The Trustees of the Association

Joy Smith (Chairperson)
Geraldine McIvor (Secretary)
Frances Kerr (Treasurer)

Members of General Management Committee

Joy Smith (Chairperson)	Elected 2021	Elected 2022	Elected 2023
Geraldine McIvor (Secretary)	Elected 2021	Elected 2022	Elected 2023
Frances Kerr (Treasurer)	Elected 2021	Elected 2022	Elected 2023
Audrey Ward (Vice Chairperson)	Elected 2021	Elected 2022	Elected 2023
Elaine Bleakney		Elected 2022	Elected 2023
Hilton Davison	Elected 2021	Elected 2022	Elected 2023
Donna Fletcher	Elected 2021	Elected 2022	Elected 2023
Evelyn Gardiner	Elected 2021	Elected 2022	
Irene Gourley	Elected 2021	Elected 2022	
Tommy McClimonds		Elected 2022	Elected 2023
Aaron McCormick	Elected 2021	Elected 2022	Elected 2023
Rosemary Verner		Co-opted 2022	Elected 2023

During the year we were very sorry to lose two of our Committee members. We wish them well and hope they can return at some point in the future.

Membership at 30 June 2024

116 paid-up members (100 paid-up members at 30 June 2023) - approximately two thirds (76) identify as female and one third (40) as male.

Corporate Members of ABCFHA

- Armagh County Museum
- Cranberry Genealogy Club, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA
- Joss/Joyce Family Association, Virginia, USA

Membership of other Organisations

- Federation of Ulster Local Studies (FULS)
- Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)

Insurance Cover

ABCFHA is insured through membership of the Federation of Ulster Local Studies, with an overall policy with Aviva. This covers Public Liability; Trustees, Directors and Officers Liability; and Fidelity Guarantee/Crime. It also includes Employers' Liability and Products Liability, neither of which we need but these are part of the insurance package provided. Around 80 organisations in Northern Ireland acquire their insurance under this scheme.

Purposes of the Association

- (1) The advancement of education for the public benefit through promoting, sustaining and increasing individual and collective knowledge and understanding of family history, with particular reference to the geographical area covered by Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and to Northern Ireland itself.
- (2) The promotion of religious and racial harmony, equality and diversity, including the lessening of conflict and discrimination, and the advancement of peace and good community relations.

Activities of the Association

In setting our objectives and planning our activities for the year the trustees have given careful consideration to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit to ensure that the activities have helped to achieve the charity's purposes and provide a benefit to the beneficiaries.

Membership of the association is open to all members of the public, no matter where they live, and to all organisations who support the purposes of ABCFHA. The Association does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation, gender or disability.

Our 116 paid-up members live in the following countries:

Northern Ireland	67	(59 in 22-23)
USA	24	(18 in 22-23)
England	11	(14 in 22-23)
Australia	4	(5 in 22-23)
Canada	4	(2 in 22-23)
Republic of Ireland	2	(2 in 22-23)
Scotland	4	(2 in 22-23)

Since ABCFHA was constituted on 4 Nov 2020, the membership fees have been as follows:

Full Member	£20 per year from date of joining
Joint Full Members (2)	£30 per year from date of joining
Online Member	£15 per year from date of joining

Student Member	£10 per year from date of joining
Corporate Member	£20 per year from date of joining

We have a website at www.abcfha.com and a presence on Facebook. The public can access all areas of the website, with the exception of the Members Only area, which contains member information, resources for members, stories submitted by members and a Forum for members to communicate. ABCFHA offers a wide range of activities which include talks, courses, workshops, visits, projects, events and one-to-one support. New last year were 'Coffee/Tea and a Bun Support Workshops', where members came along with their laptops or tablets and we worked together for two hours, with more experienced members helping others with their research, and chatting over a cuppa. This has proved so popular that we extended the session length to two and a half hours. Members can attend all of these activities with no additional charge, except for events and visits which may incur additional costs, such as meals, entry fees and transport, although these are often supported by a grant from Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, to whom we give our grateful thanks. Non-members are very welcome to join us on visits and for special events. We also offer assistance to anyone who contacts us with a family history research query.

We have a Zoom Pro account and IT equipment which enables us to run activities remotely when required and allows us to engage speakers from anywhere in the world. Using Zoom enables easy recording of talks and courses, with a link to the recording being sent out to members so that they can view this at a suitable time. This is particularly important as we have members who live in a different time zone to Northern Ireland, but is also of benefit to those members who haven't been able to attend at the time of the activity. Attendance at the time of the talks and courses varied from 20 to 46, with many more subsequently watching the recording.

This year we again held fourteen 'Coffee/Tea and a Bun Support Sessions' at Brownlow Community Hub. These were offered on different days of the week, including Saturday, so that anyone who wanted to come could hopefully find a day that suited them. They were well-attended and have now become established in our local programme. To start one of the sessions a member gave a short but very interesting talk about his recent visit to the Somme.

This year the following twelve Zoom talks were delivered, six of which were supported by a grant from Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council:

- 'The Home Front' - Living through wartime in Northern Ireland – Dr Myrtle Hill
- 'The Impact of 1 July 1916 on families in Armagh and Down' – Carole Walker
- 'Pioneers, Showmen and the Royal Flying Corps' - Guy Warner
- 'Banbridge War Memorial' – Tommy McClimonds
- 'Women in Wartime' – Dr Myrtle Hill
- 'Ulster Immigrants and the American Civil War' – Dr David Hume
- 'Local Novelist, Anne Doughty' – Jason Diamond
- 'My Ancestor in the Napoleonic Wars, Part II' – Donna Fletcher
- 'How to Use the Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland' – Dr Tim Murtagh
- 'Defence Heritage Project' – Tommy McClimonds
- 'Forgotten Women: Researching the Marginalised Women on your Family Tree' – Dr Janet Few
- 'Brownlow House and the American Troops' – David Martin

In addition, the following Zoom Courses were delivered:

- 'Using Newspapers in Your Research' – Joy Smith
- 'NI Directories to Help in Your Research' – Joy Smith

Another new venture this year was 'An Historic Walk in a Local Town or Village', with Rathfriland being the location selected for our first walk. This took place on a lovely day in early March and was

enjoyed by 14 of our members, after which we had refreshments in a local café. A booklet was produced for the walk, which is now on our website for members to use in the future. This event was supported by a grant from Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, whom we thank for their support. This new activity will be repeated in future years to enable us to learn more about the local towns and villages in which our ancestors lived and worked.

In mid-May we had a Saturday afternoon Zoom meeting with members of Cranberry Genealogy Club in Pennsylvania, following up on last year's inaugural meeting. This year, members from each organisation gave presentations for those who might be interested in visiting each other's locations in order to do research and see where and how their ancestors lived. These presentations were well received by the participants and questions and answers followed. Cranberry Genealogy Club members also receive invites to our Zoom talks throughout the year, as we do to their talks.

We undertook four main projects during the year:

- 'Seeking New Horizons' Project – this project had begun in September 2022 and ran until October 2023, when we self-published a book of stories written by our members about any of their ancestors who had emigrated to another country.
- Transcribing Project – a Transcriptions Team has been set up with members who have volunteered to participate. This involves transcribing from old materials such as books and maps, church records and newspapers, where the information contained is of value to our members who are researching family history. This project will be ongoing and new members are always welcome to join the Transcriptions Team.
- 'Our Families in Wartime' Project – this project began in September 2023 and runs until October 2024. It involves listening to talks relating to wartime (see previous list) and going on relevant visits (detailed below), culminating in our members in writing stories about their families both fighting in a war and also living at home during the war. The stories cover a range of wars from Napoleonic times through to the Cold War and are being gathered together into a self-published book.
- 'Ancestry DNA' Project – whilst the major learning involved in this project took place last year, during this year we have assisted many new members, in particular, in learning how to analyse their DNA results. This has been done on a one-to-one basis, often during our 'Coffee/Tea and a Bun' sessions at Brownlow Hub or through a one-to-one Zoom.

We again organised five visits this year, three of which related to our wartime project:

- Dromore Church of Ireland Cathedral – this was a most interesting visit where 20 members listed to a talk in the cathedral all about its history, after which we visited a local coffee shop for refreshments.
- Visit to the Royal Irish Fusiliers Museum, Armagh – 19 members and friends enjoyed an excellent guided tour around the museum.
- Visit to Banbridge New Cemetery and its War Graves – 10 members braved the weather for a very interesting and informative guided walk around the cemetery to see its war graves and hear about the soldiers interred there.
- Visit by coach to NI War Memorial (Belfast) followed by a visit to Brownlow House, Lurgan – 16 members made the trip to Belfast, where they enjoyed a superb guided tour of the NI War Memorial exhibition – this was a visit not to miss! At Brownlow House, Lurgan we had 27 members who enjoyed the exhibition relating to US Troops at Brownlow House during WWII, after which we had a lovely buffet lunch. This visit was supported by a grant from Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council.

- Armagh Heritage Library – 17 members travelled to Armagh and were given an excellent talk and tour of the library resources by Catherine Gartland, after which time was spent individually exploring what is on offer.

We ran two social events this year, important in bring our members together in person:

- ‘Historic Toys and Games that Our Ancestors Played’ – we had some refreshments and then Rosemary Verner gave 20 of our members a most interesting and memory-provoking talk and demonstration, after which we had a chance to play with some of the toys and games!
- ‘New Year Brunch’ – 41 members and friends enjoyed this event, held on Saturday 20 January at Sinton’s at The Bridge, Scarva. We had brunch, followed by an illustrated presentation about Rationing in WWII, after which members were able to peruse an amazing exhibition of wartime memorabilia, displayed by those present.

We gave presentations and talks to three local organisations during the year:

- Portadown Probus in the Seagoe Hotel, Portadown
- Banbridge Historical Society in Banbridge Old Town Hall
- Parkinson’s UK Armagh Support Group at Seagoe Parish Centre, Portadown

Five of our overseas members visited us in Northern Ireland during 23-24. All were entertained and we took all but one, who had visited previously, to see where their ancestors had lived, the churches they had attended and where family members were buried. Ancestral tourism is on the rise and it’s an aspect of our association which needs to be encouraged, preferably with assistance and support from other local bodies.

In January 2024, David Weir, Education and Activities Officer from the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council’s Lurgan Townscape Heritage Scheme, asked us to provide a basic five week course in Family History at Lurgan Library. The course took place in April/May 2024, with 17 participants having five interactive 1 hour learning sessions on the library computers, with worksheets and facilitation provided by five of our members. All participants completed the course and the feedback was excellent. Four of those on the course immediately joined our association, where they continue to learn at Hub sessions. We would be happy to repeat this course at any local venue that had the necessary IT facilities, or with participants who have their own laptops.

Finally, we should report on our taking part in ‘Forgotten Women Fridays’ – one of our regular speakers, Dr Janet Few, is an organiser of these research days, where some of our members volunteer to research marginalised women from the past and write up their stories, which are published on the Few Forgotten Women website at www.fewforgottenwomen.com. We have been invited to take part in four of these research days, and hope to continue this in the future.

Achievements of the Association

In its fourth year of operation, through the talks, courses, support sessions, workshops, projects, visits and events it has organised, ABCFHA has advanced education for the public benefit through promoting, sustaining, and increasing individual and collective knowledge and understanding of family history, with particular reference to the geographical area covered by Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and to Northern Ireland itself.

We are delighted to have increased our membership from 100 paid-up members on 30 June 2023 to 116 paid-up members on 30 June 2024. Many new friendships have been formed amongst members locally and from around the world and a greater understanding of each other’s lives and backgrounds has been gained, helping to promote religious and racial harmony, equality and diversity, lessen conflict and discrimination, and advance peace and good community relations.

The family history research carried out by members following our courses and talks, along with the outcomes from our DNA project, have resulted in many members discovering ancestral connections between their families, some of which have been of great surprise to them, and the fact that these discoveries are spread around amongst members of all backgrounds again contributes to harmony, equality and good community relations.

ABCFHA beneficiaries during the year have been our members and their families, friends who have joined us at our events and visits, those who have enjoyed reading our books, our corporate members and those members of the public who have contacted us for assistance with a family research query.

There is a private benefit arising from our purposes, as professional speakers whom we engage and the places we visit receive financial remuneration as a result, but this benefit is incidental, and we could not achieve our purposes without them. The public benefit which ensues is much greater than this incidental private benefit. None of our own members who acts as a speaker, runs a course for members or carries out any work for the Association receives any remuneration for doing so.

The only harm which might flow from our purposes is a member becoming upset at a discovery of something in their family history such as an illegitimate birth, bigamy, villainy and so on. We try to minimise such upset by preparing members for what they might find, and if anyone feels that they really couldn't cope with a distressing discovery, then we would ask them to consider if family history research is for them. If, however, they choose to do their research and if something does come to light which they find distressing, an experienced member of Committee, who will be able to empathise having had many surprising discoveries in their own family research, will talk this through with them and look at possible scenarios which might explain the situation. Such occurrences are very common in family history and have happened to many, many people who do family history research, which can help people cope with their own discoveries. This knowledge, and a little time to digest things, should result in the member coping with the new information they have found. This potential harm is very much outweighed by the benefits arising from our purposes.

Financial Summary

ABCFHA achieved a surplus of £1029.63 in 23-24. Whilst lower than the surplus of £1502.07 from 22-23, we have used our funds wisely to offer affordable activities to our members and the wider public. We will ensure that a large surplus is not built up, year upon year, as we wish to use our funds for the purposes for which our association was set up. However, a healthy surplus helps to ensure the financial stability of the association and assists in planning for activities in the following year.

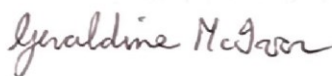
We are delighted to now own three laptops, used to enable those members who don't have their own IT equipment to carry out research at Hub sessions. They were paid for in part from a grant from Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, to whom our thanks is extended for their support of our programme of events and our core running costs.

Declaration

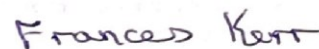
This Report was approved by the undersigned Trustees on 19 October 2024:



Joy Smith (Chairperson)



Geraldine McIvor (Secretary)



Frances Kerr (Treasurer)