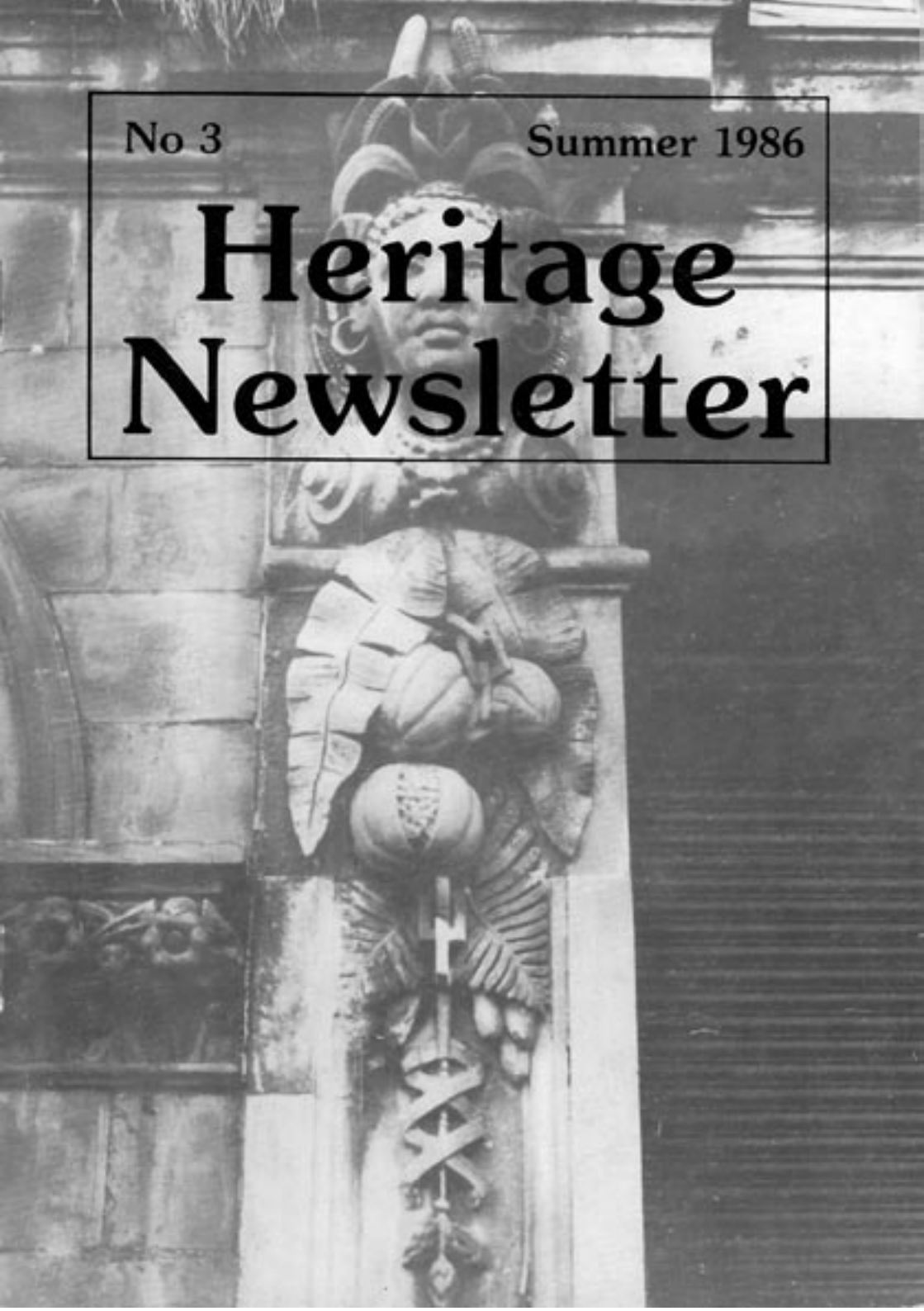


No 3

Summer 1986

# Heritage Newsletter



The Ulster Architectural Heritage Society exists to promote the appreciation and enjoyment of good architecture of all periods — from the prehistoric to the contemporary — in the nine counties of Ulster, to encourage the preservation and restoration of buildings of merit or importance; and to increase public awareness of the beauty, history and character of local neighbourhoods. This newsletter outlines some of the major activities of the Society during 1985.

**President:** C. E. B. Brett, Esq., CBE, MA

**Vice Presidents:** Dr Maurice J. Craig  
John Cornforth

**UAHS Committee for 1986:**

J. E. C. Lewis-Crosby, (*Chairman*)  
Mrs Primrose Wilson, (*Vice-Chairman*)  
A. J. Rankin, (*Hon Secretary*)  
J. W. L. Clarke, (*Hon Treasurer*)  
David Evans  
I. B. Gailey  
Mrs. Lyn Gallagher  
Mrs. M. A. K. Garner  
Keith Gilmour  
Brian Gunn-King  
H. C. Hatrick  
W. H. Jellema  
Henry McCandless  
Brian T. McKee  
Dan McNeill  
Brian Mackey  
Miss Marion Meek  
Marcus Patton  
J. D. Stelfox

**Staff:**

Elizabeth Cavanagh (*Secretary*)  
Denis Vance (*Manager, ACE Team*)

Our front cover photograph, shows detail of McCausland's Warehouse Victoria Street.

The back cover shows Clondeboye Co. Down, the subject of a colour publication by the society.

## Editorial

For this edition of the Newsletter the Society is looking to the city centre of Belfast again. The best of Royal Avenue is now gone and we look with some apprehension towards a new complex which it seems will present us with a long bland featureless facade. Attention has switched to McCauslands, the Grade I listed warehouse in Victoria Street, owned by the Department of the Environment offering us a challenge which we must not lose. The plight of this building is described in an article in this journal. There seems to be a will in some quarters to do justice to the Lagan Bank area of the city. At last there is to be a Conservation Area in Belfast, with the Queen's University area due to be designated; the positive approach to Upper Crescent is warmly welcomed.

At this time it seems inevitable that attention is concentrated in Belfast, but the Society welcomes the opportunity to become more involved in areas outside the city. The publication of lists, the Society's outings and the representation of the Committee reflects the whole province, but the lively issues tend to revolve around Belfast. One exception has been the victory of the safeguarding of Navan, after a keenly contested battle. We offer our congratulations to those who argued the case for Navan so ably.

The Society lost Kenneth Adams during the year. A well known and respected figure in Dungannon, Mr. Adams contributed knowledge and wisdom to the Committee for many years, acting as Vice-Chairman, and ably representing the Committee on many occasions. His death is a sad loss.

The Society has a new Vice-President in John Cornforth, accepting the position after the retirement of Lord Esher. John Cornforth has always taken a keen interest in the Society's affairs, and in matters of architectural interest in the province, an interest which is reflected in his articles in Country Life. The Society is most grateful for his involvement.

## Lyttle and McCauslands Seed Warehouses Victoria Street, Belfast

The finest surviving Victorian warehouse in Belfast — but for how much longer? Empty and neglected for ten years — divorced from the city by the ever increasing traffic, surrounded by car parks, quietly rotting away, unnoticed by the public eye and virtually ignored by the public purse.

But, after this decade of decline comes some faint glimmer of hope — public money invested in holding repairs, private money interested in a restoration — maybe there can be life before death.



Belfast a century ago must have been an exciting place — brimming with commercial self-confidence and enterprise. The population grew from 50,000 in 1831 to 250,000 in 1891; linen,

shipbuilding and engineering mushroomed into vast industries and Belfast became one of the commercial centres of Britain, and thus the world.

The city's prosperity is forever displayed in public buildings such as the Court House (1846) Queen's College (1849) and the Custom House (1857), but it is in commercial architecture that the changes are perhaps most prominently displayed. Gloomy back rooms behind dull Georgian facades held no attraction to the booming new businesses wishing to display their wealth and stability to few customers. The banks led the way but very soon the wealthier merchants were vying for position, mostly around the commercial centre of High Street.

It was an age of plenty for architect and tradesman alike. Freed from Georgian puritanism and unfettered by the rigidity of one true style, architects such as Hastings, Lanyon and Lynn were free to apply a range of eclectic styles. William Hastings contributed much to Belfast's architecture, and of his buildings still with us, Great Victoria Street Baptist Church (1865) the Newsletter Offices in Donegall Street (1873) and Lyttle and McCauslands seed warehouses, are his best works.

As the architects moved from severe Georgian simplicity to full blown Victorian exuberance, so the craftsmen kept pace, reaching extraordinarily high levels of workmanship. Pre-eminent among them was Thomas Fitzpatrick, sculptor, responsible for the stonework on many of the city's finest buildings — the Custom House, the Ulster Bank in Waring Street, the Ulster Brewery in Sandy Row and Lyttle and McCauslands.

The four storey seed warehouses of Lyttle and McCauslands were built in 1868 for two rival firms of seed merchants, with superficially independent facades yet united by their common architect and builder and eventually in reality as the firms merged.

The facade to the Lyttle building is the simpler, on a symmetrical 2-3-2 layout with central doorway, whilst the McCausland facade breaks with tradition to give a 1-2-1-2 pattern allowing entrances to be placed in the single bays. Whilst the Lyttle facade is heavily adorned with intricate sculptured column heads, it is the McCausland building that is exceptional by any standard. Five "caryatid" heads support the ground floor cornice — a curly headed African, a turbaned Indian, and a feathered Red Indian represent the far corners of the globe (suggesting the all encompassing trade of the firm) whilst Victoria and Albert as Demolo and Poseidon flank the main entrance door.

Whilst the quality of these carvings in themselves is impressive, the complete facade with its heavy string courses and individual window heads right up to an intricate, almost celtic, parapet, forms a unique composition of remarkable balance.

The interior is more strictly functional, with cast iron columns supporting timber floor beams and an almost complete absence of internal division. The once covered lightwell to the rear is now gone with the demolition of the rear wings, but the essential character still remains.

The Department of the Environment has owned the building for over ten years. Acquired for a now shelved roads scheme and since allowed to decline, it is an embarrassment to its owners. Various studies and reports have been undertaken as to the building's structural stability and potential for re-use in a government office complex, but all proved abortive.

In 1984, the Historic Buildings Branch of the D.O.E. commissioned a condition report which was more encouraging as to the long term viability of the building, but nevertheless estimated a cost of approx £200,000 for holding repairs to stabilize the fabric from further deterioration.

Since then much more of the surroundings have been demolished and now McCauslands stands alone amongst a sea of surface level car parking.

In 1985, the Society, in conjunction with Consarc Partnership and George Chaplin, architects, submitted an application for grant aid under the Urban Development Grant Feasibility Study scheme. The idea was to carry out a full story of the McCauslands block and the surrounding area, to put together a package for developers who would use development on the vacant sites around to enable the high cost of restoring the McCauslands block to be absorbed. In January 1986 the Belfast Development Office replied, informing the society that it could not grant-aid at present — partly because an application for a building cost grant aid had been received from a developer, and partly because the Belfast Planning Office, as part of the Belfast Urban Area Plan Review, had not yet decided on a framework for development for that area of the city.

The application still stands, and the Society awaits the resolution of these issues. The Society feels that a feasibility study should be carried out before an individual developer purchases the McCauslands block, although we would be supportive of any proposals which retain the building in a scheme to provide for its long term future. Thus the whole area, and in particular the connection between the city and the river, needs to be carefully considered and a restored building set into a realistic context.

Meanwhile, in the hope that new uses can be found, the Historic Monuments and Buildings Branch have funded the Society's ACE team to carry out urgent holding repairs to prevent further decline. These are confined to making the building watertight and treating the extensive dry rot that has caught hold in the last few years, but it will ensure that there is a building capable of full restoration when the right development can be established.

The Department of the Environment, in all its various forms, has a responsibility to ensure the right development does happen.

## Congratulations

A model office conversion has been carried out at **Galwally House** off the Ormeau Road in Belfast. Originally a private house for one of the directors of H & J Martin, built in 1885, Galwally was better known latterly as the UVF Hospital, but had been empty for some years when it was acquired by Goldblatt & Co for conversion to their offices. The restoration, by architects Lynn & Wright, retains many fine interior features and the sense of spacious grandeur that is so often sacrificed in such conversions.

Last year we recorded the restoration of 14 and 16 **Joy Street**, Belfast; this year has seen the restoration of the remainder of the terrace by the Housing Executive under WDR & RT Taggart, architects. A small neighbouring terrace at 4-10 Joy Street, which was earmarked for demolition, has been transferred to Hearth for future restoration, but much else in this important Markets area is still under treat from redevelopment.

A rescue operation at the former **Carlisle Memorial Methodist Church** by the Ulster Provident Housing Association has proved it with a new roof following the theft of flashings, and a complex of artists' flats and workspaces is envisaged for its interior.

At long last we are seeing some shopfronts that manage to be sympathetic to the old buildings in which they are inserted while still being distinctively modern. The revamped **Belfast Wine Company** shop on Ridgeway Street is such an example, and was accompanied by careful restoration of the roof and upper part of the building as well — a very modest building made eye-catching without any vulgarity.

It goes against the grain to praise the building that occupies the site of a former listed building, particularly when its erection has made yet another historic building redundant, but the Leighton Kennedy Fitzgerald Partnership's new **Post Office** in Castle Place is an attractive piece of modern infill that works well in townscape terms. The Conservation Branch of the DoE is shortly to take up residence on its upper floors, the space once occupied by the lamented Ulster Club building.

Probably the most spectacular new building to open in 1985 was the **Beaten Docket** in Great Victoria Street, whose eclectic mix of pediment and plastic barrel vault with magnificent gold lettering vies bravely with the adjacent Crown Bar. In case you'd never heard the expression before, a beaten docket is an unsuccessful bet — but Messrs Taggart's design seem to be paying dividends.

Two new conservation areas have been declared: Downpatrick, with its mediaeval street pattern and fine Georgian buildings in English Street; and Strangford, the picturesque village at the mouth of Strangford Lough. The forthcoming designation of Queen's conservation area is discussed elsewhere in this newsletter.

Congratulations to two sensitive Newry projects. The former **Tea Warehouse** in the Mall has been well converted to **Toners Electrical shop** and **Brown Row, Kilmorey Street**, a good terrace in the brownstone tradition, has been well handled as a new private development.

An encouraging sign of inner city renaissance has been carried out at **Balmoral Buildings** beside RBAI. This project incorporates not only shops and offices but apartments as well; this housing must be closest to the centre of the city.

Good work, including cast stonework to three facades has been carried out at **Dundarave**, near Bushmills, the italianate palazzo house designed by Charles Lanyon in 1847.

## John Phillips, Northern Ireland's new Director of Conservation

Northern Ireland's new Director of Conservation has a very suitable hero. Since boyhood John Phillips has been a devoted admirer of Robert Lloyd Praeger, the writer and scholar who managed to combine depth of learning in botany zoology and geology with a comfortable working knowledge of history and architecture, presenting it all with a human touch and in a form which was accessible to expert and layman alike. The new conservation service will embrace all these disciplines and has, as a prime aim, a commitment to increase education in environment matters.

John Phillip's love of the countryside began at an early age and he recalls juvenile rambles with the Belfast Naturalists Field Club. Completing his education at Bangor Grammar School in 1948, he found himself looking around for a job which would be an outlet for these interests, and was lucky enough to find one, winning a Ministry of Agriculture scholarship to Aberdeen University. From there he came back to Northern Ireland, into Forestry Division, becoming

Divisional Forest Officer for Fermanagh. There was plenty of scope for general conservation work there. Of Forestry Division's 73,000 hectares only 56,000 are actually covered in coniferous commercial planting, and John Phillips gave rein to his interests in a county where poor agricultural land was less developed. Much of the land least interesting for forestry was most interesting ecologically, and rich in areas of wildlife habitat.

During this time John Phillip's love of the countryside grew; he served on the RSPB NI Committee and Council, the Wild Birds advisory committee, as Forestry Observer on the Nature Reserves Committee and on the Ulster Trust for Nature Conservation Committee, and became a respected figure in the voluntary conservation organisations; he cheerfully admits to some reluctance when it was decided that he should move from the wide open spaces of Fermanagh to a desk job as Chief Forest Officer in Belfast.



*Belfast Telegraph*

The Balfour Report brought the next change. Dr. Jean Balfour had recommended that a Conservation Service would be set up, with two divisions — a Countryside Division and a Historic Monuments and Buildings Division — with an Under Secretary at its head, a Service powerful enough to stand against other strong governmental interests. In the end it was decided that the Director of Conservation should be at Assistant Secretary level, rather than

Under Secretary, but it is pointed out that in fact there are no conflicting interests within this wing of the Department of the Environment, and if there are fights to be fought, then the Under Secretary who has Conservation Service as his responsibility, can defend his corner against the big guns of Roads Division, Drainage and the like.

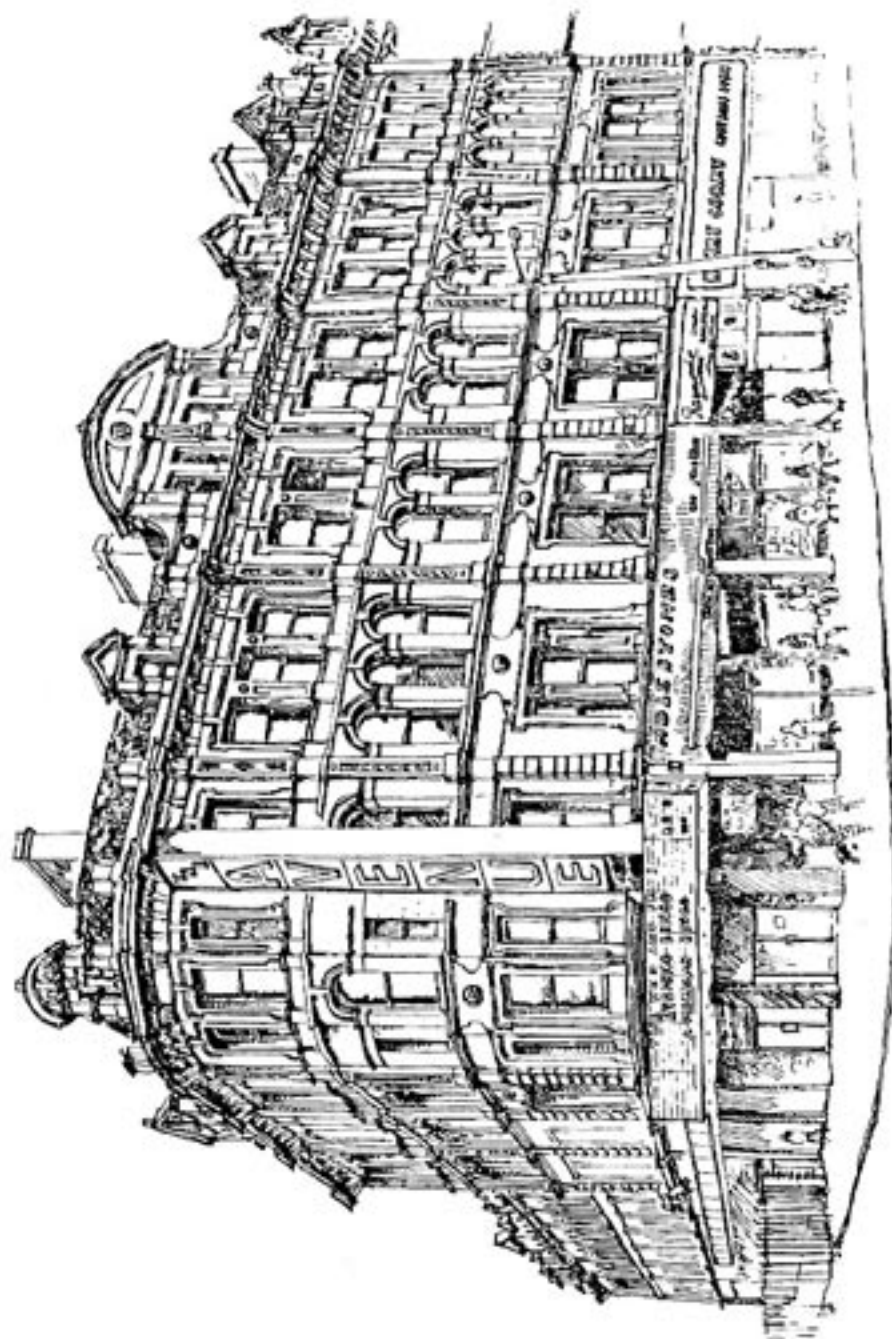
One of the most pressing needs identified by Dr. Balfour was the urgent need to establish more Areas of Special Scientific Interest. John Phillip's sees this as a first priority, and he is at present setting up a system for the identification and subsequent designation of sites throughout Northern Ireland.

John Phillips would be the first to admit that he is not an expert in architecture, but he has a natural sympathy and respect for the architectural heritage of the province. He looks forward to the move of offices when Conservation Branch will move from the 'Huts' at Stormont, and the Historic Buildings and Monuments Branch will change their address from Connsbrook Avenue to the new Post Office building in Castle Junction (a building which the Society feels works well in its position). The combination of the separate disciplines, will, he hopes increase his own education in things architectural.

He is, however, keenly aware of the problems in this field, and, while he acknowledges the Society's concern about pressures on the staff of the Historic Monuments and Buildings Branch, he points to the fact that an additional architect has already been appointed to the Branch, in addition to an increase in administrative staff partly to cope with the additional task of grant aiding listed churches. Listing has recommenced, and although he is worried about the fact that Northern Ireland listing only pre-dates 1914 at present, he feels that this situation will have to remain until the backlog of listing before that date is cleared. Spot listing for buildings built after 1914 may be allowed in emergency cases.

John Phillips is an avowed conservationist, but when asked to give advice to lobby or pressure groups at this time in Northern Ireland's environmental developments gently suggests that there are times when he wishes that enthusiasts, with the best will in the world, might be more careful not to appear too extreme or even strident in their approach, and that they might serve their cause better in Northern Ireland with a more reasonable, balanced attitude.

John Phillips is certainly a reasonable man, who has earned respect on all sides and has now been given the mighty task of bringing conservation in Northern Ireland into the 1980's. It is difficult to imagine a better choice for the job and the Society wishes him well in his appointment.



## Lisnabreeny

There was a great sign of relief in the National Trust when Lagan College, the All Children Together School agreed to a lease for Lisnabreeny House at Cregagh.

Lisnabreeny was a good early nineteenth century building with a fine facade, but it was never an easy house for the Trust to manage — good enough to preserve, not good enough to show. The property was given by Nesca Robb, the historian and writer, in 1937, and the rent from its 136 acres provided the major part of the Trust's income in those important early years.

It started its life in National Trust hands as Ireland's first city Youth Hostel but was billeted during the war. After that it was let to private tenants, and it gradually decayed until it deteriorated into "a bit of a dump" in the Trust's own admission. There were prolonged but fruitless negotiations with the local council, while the house continued to degenerate, becoming a dangerous refuge for glue sniffers.

So what could be done? No money could be released from important projects already underfunded and the National Trust Committee and staff were facing the impossible situation of considering the demolition of a building with a listed facade.

At the last moment the fairy godmother of a realistic long term tenant arrived in the shape of Lagan College who will restore the central block with a contribution for restoration from the National Trust, and a little help from Historic Monuments and Buildings Branch. Better late than never for Lisnabreeny, but it was very nearly too late.

## Castlecourt Development

In our last newsletter we described the threat to a large block in Royal Avenue extending from the Grand Central Hotel to the Head Post Office. These buildings were demolished last autumn, and the site has become a car park pending the erection of the Castlecourt complex. This is a £40m scheme being designed by Building Design Partnership for John Laing (& Son Ltd?). It is to comprise a covered shopping centre, an atrium serving a 6-storey office block that will completely break the historic cornice line of Royal Avenue, and considerable associated car parking extending back to Millfield. Since there is no great demand for office space in the city centre — many upper floors lie vacant — it was essential for the success of this part of the scheme to identify a customer for it, and apparently the Department of the Environment has seen fit to lend its support by taking on this role.

In addition to the large site already cleared, Laings are negotiating to acquire the Avenue Cinema building in order to increase the scale of the scheme still further, and since that building is currently providing many viable jobs, there has been objection from its current occupants. Built in 1882, this is a handsome Italianate stucco building with pediments and dormers enlivening the rich cornice, and its side elevation (exposed by the recent demolition) is also fine. The Picture House, which later changed its name to the Avenue, took up residence in it in 1912, and it was the first cinema in Belfast to show "talkies". The Society has objected to its demolition, but unfortunately the building has not been listed and it has no statutory protection.

Although the Society's chief interest in this development has been the preservation of the Victorian buildings, we are also very much concerned that any replacement building will be of a quality and character appropriate to this vital and prominent site, and we have had a number of discussions with BDP and the planners to discuss how this can be achieved. The proposed site is vast, and the architects' task in developing it is not an easy one; nevertheless we have had to express strong reservations about the initial designs, which are for a group of loosely related blocks outlined by heavy structural grids. The atrium is a fashionable device, and there seems to be a determination that the complex shall have one at whatever cost, even if it means cutting the budget for external features and concentrating the offices into a vertical stack rather than a horizontal one that could provide a more appropriate massing. These are early days however, and we must hope that more interesting and sympathetic detailing emerges. In the meantime, we understand that by no means all the shopping units are allocated, and there seems to be a degree of uncertainty about the development — have we lost two fine buildings (see Obituary, p 18) for nothing?

## Hearth

Although its work is financed by the Department of the Environment, the housing association Hearth is managed jointly by the Society and the National Trust, and it continues to combine the twin aims of providing modern rental housing and of rescuing threatened or derelict listed buildings.

This year its activities have been centred on the Co. Antrim village of Glenarm, at the head of the first of the nine Glens. Glenarm is a designated conservation area, situated on the Coast road, but largely untouched by traffic. Its main streets, Toberwine Street and the wider and more residential Altmore Street, contain plenty of modest stucco buildings of character, while the Vennel winds picturesquely up a steep hillside, and at the foot of Castle Street is

the romantic Barbican of Glenarm Castle. Despite its lovely setting and pleasant character, the village contains a number of vacant properties. Larne Borough Council had acquired the Courthouse, an Italianate roughcast building with campanile, but could not bring itself to repair it. After several years of decay, the local Baptist church has now taken it on (rather appropriately, since its previous occupant had installed an exceptional number of baths!).

Much more problematical were the former Antrim Arms Hotel, the largest building in Toberwine Street, which had closed after a bomb blast in the early part of the Troubles, and the old Schoolhouse beside the Barbican, whose ownership was in some doubt and which had also been disused for some years following the closure of the Youth Club which had succeeded the school. Hearth was able to acquire both buildings some years ago, and received approvals to undertake their conversion in late 1983 and early 1984 respectively.

The Antrim Arms had been built in the mid 19th century as a hotel by the Antrim family, and it had later incorporated an earlier house (at one time an RIC Barracks) to the south. It is three storeys high with a rusticated ground floor, ample doorcase and carriageway arch, in stucco over limestone construction. The blast had caused only localised structural damage, and despite its very derelict appearance, the restoration was fairly straightforward. On the other hand, as architects John Neil + Partners discovered, its conversion into self-contained flats was by no means simple. The problems of meeting building control and fire requirements and fitting useful houses into the buildings were eventually resolved, and in addition it was decided to build a terrace of five single-storey cottages in place of former out-buildings to the rear in order to make best use of the extensive site. The work was completed by builders Martin + Hamilton Ltd some months ahead of schedule in October, and the resultant 5 cottages, 4-bed house (in the old barracks) and five flats were allocated to local people. The contract sum was about £260,000 and in addition to the basic improvements, the work also included reinstatement of a decorative cobbled footpath in front of the Hotel — achieved despite spirited initial resistance by the Roads Service!

The conversion of the Schoolhouse was a smaller but equally tricky job. The building, erected in 1825 at a cost of £500 again by the Antrim estate, was designed to set off the Castle Barbican which towers above it on the other side of the bridge. It is built of basalt with cream and pink sandstone dressings, of which the latter have unfortunately decayed considerably, but despite many slates having slipped or cracked, the old roof timbers were still remarkably sound. The original cast iron lattice windows had been largely replaced over the years in timber, and replacements were cast in aluminium for lightness, some being provided as opening lights to

meet ventilation regulations. Internally, the two original halls were subdivided and a new floor inserted, so that two 3-bedroom houses have been created within the shell. Contractors were again Martin + Hamilton Ltd, the architectural work being carried out in-house, and the conversion was completed at a cost of £63,000 in January 1986.

## Activities

The year's activities commenced with a lecture by Angélique Day, Hon. Research Fellow at the Institute of Irish Studies, QUB, on "19th Century Topographical Drawing and the Irish Ordnance Survey". She particularly emphasised the part played by the Officers of the Royal Engineers in making a most valuable record of the buildings and topography throughout Ireland.

The Annual General Meeting on 20th February was notable for the excellent address by Mr Ian McQuiston of the Historic Monuments & Buildings Branch. He displayed a deep knowledge of the Department and its evolution. It is a matter of regret that he has since been transferred to the Housing Branch of the DoE; a great loss to the conservation movement.

Marcus Patton led a party of 40 round Bangor, the town of his boyhood, on Sunday 24 March. The members visited the Abbey, the Castle, the Presbyterian Church and concluded the afternoon with a walk along the seafront.

The 28th March saw the launch at Ballywalter Park of the second in the series of Society publications on the great houses of Ulster. Lord Dunleath, in an amusing speech, welcomed the representatives of the Council and Press together with other contributors to the booklet.



Chris Hill



On Easter Monday, 8th April, by kind permission of Lord and Lady Dunleath, a team of volunteers from the Society staffed the house and garden opening at Ballywalter Park. Although it was early in the season, and the rhododendrons were not fully in bloom, we were blessed with fine weather and the event was an undoubted financial success.

The spring and summer outdoor events commenced on the 4th May with a visit to Collon, Co. Louth led by Dr Anthony Malcomson of the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. He has made a special study of the Foster family, whose influence on the village is very marked.

As with a number of events during the year the "Fermanagh Week-end", from 24th to 26th May, was affected by the wet weather. The Society has visited Co. Fermanagh on many occasions, but never before have so many buildings and sites been covered in such great detail. Marion Meek's wide knowledge of archaeological remains proved of immense interest to members, and they were undaunted by the rain.

The June event, a proposed visit to Newry, Bessbrook and Derrymore, unfortunately had to be cancelled as the refurbishment of Derrymore by the National Trust had not been completed.

On the 27th July, Marion Meek led members around the Monastic site at Nendrum on the eastern shore of Strangford Lough. Following a picnic, the party moved to Ringdufferin House, the home of Mr and Mrs J. P. Mackie. An idyllic afternoon was spent strolling around the secluded walled garden under the guidance of the owners who went to great pains to describe many of the unusual plants and shrubs. Next, the members were guests of Mr and Mrs Paddy Mackie, where they took tea and viewed the wildlife collection and hatchery. Because of the small size of the buildings visited numbers were restricted, and many members were disappointed.

Colin Hatrick took members to see Beardville, Co. Antrim on the 24th August where they were very hospitably received by Mr and Mrs John Baxter. Due to heavy rain a visit to Dunmull had to be foregone, but this was compensated for by an opportunity to see the church, by Vincent Craig, at Ballycoalt. On this occasion, although the numbers were increased, we were again over-subscribed, proving the great popularity of outings which include attractive private houses.

A party of thirty-three members, led by Marion Meek, visited Londonderry on the 21st September. They viewed the Richmond Centre and walked the walls in pouring rain visiting amongst other buildings, the partially constructed "O'Doherty's Tower". The afternoon terminated with a tour of St Columb's Cathedral.

Next to great houses, churches are always popular with our members and this again proved true when Paul Larmour took a large party to see Victorian Churches in North and West Belfast on Sunday, 20th October. They visited the Sinclair Seamen's Presbyterian Church; Duncairn Presbyterian Church; St Enoch's Presbyterian Church; St Matthew's, Shankill Road and St Peter's, Antrim Road, where they enjoyed tea.

The annual Festival lecture was given on 14th November by Mr John Hume of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Division, Edinburgh, on "The World's Greatest Shipyard". The event received wide support from both members and public alike.

In connection with the publication of the third booklet in our series on major houses in Ulster, a party was held in the music room at Clondeboye to launch the publication on that house. We were most indebted to the Marquess and Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava for their co-operation with this event and with the two-day opening of their home, on Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th November, for the benefit of our members. Added interest, if that was needed, was provided by the presence of Mr Gavin Stamp, who lectured on Saturday on "The First Marquess and Victorian Architecture". An opportunity to see the work of the Conservation Volunteers in the grounds was rather limited by the lack of daylight.

The Society's Christmas event took place, as before, in the Arts Council building on 5th December. An exhibition featuring the work of the ACE team was on view, and the usual accompaniment of music and good cheer was provided.

## Book Review

**A Heritage from Stone**, by Brian Boyd, *Ulster Television*, 1986. 96pp. illustrated. Price £4.95.

Sunday morning is not a good time to broadcast to the Ulster public: one half of it is at church, while most of the other half is on the golf course. Only the small minority which comes gradually to life around elevenses was able to see the splendid series of six television programmes which Ulster Television broadcast earlier this year covering the history of building in Ulster from the stone age to the present day, written and presented by Brian Boyd, with advice from Alistair Rowan.

This book is an attractive summary of the programmes, and as befits its origins, it combines prolific illustration, much of it in colour, with a succinct text that avoids jargon and reads easily. One misses memorable television moments such as Mr Boyd constructing a Norman sandcastle using lollipop sticks and paper cups, but the

enthusiasm of the series comes across in a text which manages to say good things even about the New University building at Jordanstown — an example of "Building for Bureaucrats". The title of the book, incidentally, is something of a misnomer, since the contents describe many buildings of brick and stucco, but our earliest buildings, and many of our finest later ones, are of course built of stone.

Television spin-offs are becoming de rigeur for programme series, but UTV are to be congratulated on providing such a handsome little book on what many would still see as rather a minority interest. It makes a perfect "stocking filler", and is an admirably clear introduction to our local architecture and the history behind it. Let us hope that its sales will be boosted by an early reshowing of the television programmes at a time when people are actually in the vicinity of their boxes.

M.P.

*Bardon, Jonathan, Belfast 1,000 Years, by Jonathan Bardon and Stephen Conlin, Belfast, Blackstaff Press, 1985.*

**Belfast 1,000 Years** is the second title in the city history series that made its debut in 1984 with "Dublin: a thousand years of Wood Quay" by the same author and illustrator. Unlike the first book in the series, the Belfast book does not focus entirely on the development of one small area but picks out significant events in the history of the city and sets them in their context.

**Belfast 1,000 Years** is not for the aficionado of potted history. In the author's own words the book "open(s) windows at fifteen successive stages over the last 1,000 years". It is a stimulating approach, giving the reader a flavour of Belfast's by no means tranquil history. Sacking, rioting, hanging and bombing predominate but the windows open also on to jollification showing hats being thrown into the air at the launch of the Oceanic and the, by now hatless, populace cheering home Barry McGuigan.

The detailed illustrations are a delight. Snowballers frolic by the Farsset blissfully unaware of the arrival of Edward and Robert Bruce and as Hugh Roe O'Donnell does his worst to the castle of Belfast, an unconcerned native relieves himself at the side of a more humble dwelling. The illustrator does not even spare us "the fly-blown heads of a Crumlin lawyer and two Ballynahinch insurgents" on the Market house spikes in his portrayal of the hanging of Henry Joy McCracken. And there is plenty of interest, even if it is tinged with despair, for the devotee of building history. The view from Castle Place is illustrated as it was in 1864 and again in 1985 by which time the Bank Buildings had been altered and the Ulster Club demolished. The Grand Central Hotel is shown but of course it too has now gone.

**Belfast 1,000 Years** is a pleasure to own even if it is an impossible shape and that, after all, is a small price to pay for the excellent illustrations.

K.L.

*C. B. E. Brett, Buildings of Belfast 1700-1914, revised edition, Friar's Bush Press, 1985.*

In the book dealers' catalogues Charles Brett's **Building of Belfast**, either the original 1967 edition or the 1969 second impression, is invariably marked 'SCARCE' and priced accordingly. The issue of this revised edition, admirably produced by the Friar's Bush Press, means that this splendid book is once more readily available.

Although the interior of Sinclair's Seamen's Church has been banished from the dust wrapper, the interior of the volume remains substantially unaltered. The author has retained the text as it was published nearly twenty years ago, but has written a special introduction, added footnotes providing reassessments and indicating the changes in the urban landscape, and altered the captions to most of the illustrations. Much of this has clearly been a gloomy task. 'In the years since 1966', begins the new introduction, 'the architectural character of Belfast has changed utterly: and not for the better'. The footnotes and the captions contain a litany of destruction: 'bomb-damaged and demolished'; 'vandalised'; 'all blocked up, and destined to become a roundabout'; 'no longer'; 'gone'. But there has been some progress. Despite the fate of James Owen's excellent Head Post Office in Royal Avenue — only the most recent of much officially-sanctioned vandalism — the preservation and restoration of the Grand Opera House, the Crown Bar and the Water Office, among others, demonstrate that we have not entirely lost our collective architectural sensibilities. Charles Brett himself must personally take much of the credit for the shift of public opinion in favour of (at least some) conservation.

**Buildings of Belfast** is no arid architectural textbook. It is, above all, a personal and sharply-observed account of the city. Where else could we discover that the sword King Billy is carrying south-eastward down Clifton Street has been replaced at the wrong angle, or that the crockets on the Albert Memorial have not been replaced at all? What, too, has happened to the 'Mulhouse virgins'? Who else but Charles Brett could so felicitously describe the Crumlin Road Courthouse as having been 'rather gaudily repainted to look like an orange-cream-cake'? Anyone who has the slightest concern for the architectural heritage of Belfast, or, indeed, Ireland, should buy this volume, even if they already possess that scarce first edition.

K.J.

# OBITUARY

## The Ulster Tavern, Belfast

On the night of 28 July, a terrorist bomb exploded near the Old Town Hall, which became Belfast Magistrates Court a few years ago. It did considerable damage to the Town Hall, but that it is expected that will be made good in due course. Unfortunately, the building across the road at the corner of Victoria Street and Chichester Street was also badly damaged, and the NIO insisted that it be demolished. The Ulster Tavern was not a listed building, having been designed in 1915 by W J Moore using a mongrel mixture of Queen Anne upper floors and classical ground floor in bulbous faience, but it was a building of character, and considered to have one of the last few remaining decent pub interiors in the city. Its loss has raised interesting questions about the powers of the NIO to insist on demolition of bomb-damaged buildings, and of its consequent reluctance to assist with full reinstatement.

## Windsor Castle, Belfast

Another public house to bite the dust last year was the old Elbow Room, formerly the Windsor Castle, a corner pub richly covered in moulded tiles. Blocked up for a number of years, it has been demolished to make way for a new road scheme linking Dublin Road with Great Victoria Street.

## Grand Central Hotel and Head Post Office, Belfast

The threat to demolish these buildings was described in our last newsletter, and the Post Office building was described at length on that occasion. The block was cleared last autumn (though not before Stephen Conlin recorded it for posterity in the last plate of **Belfast 1000 Years**, reviewed on p 10). The Grand Central, built about 1890, was one of the last buildings to go up in the Victorian development of Royal Avenue, and it followed the strong cornice line that had been established, but topped it with a soaring cupola that formed an eyecatcher from all parts of the Avenue. The building was celebrated for its undulating horizontals (caused by uneven settlement of the timber-pile foundations), but the traditional lime mortar construction had accommodated the changing stresses well. In its heyday, the Grand Central was the city's premier hotel, with over 200 bedrooms and electric light throughout, and every distinguished visitor to the city (such as Sousa when his band played

two concerts at the Ulster Hall in 1911) stayed there. In the late 60s it closed its doors, and became for a while an army base before succumbing to the present redevelopment. A few years ago, Royal Avenue was richly Victorian along almost all its length above the ground floor shops; the demolition of this block has been a critical blow for the integrity of this once fine thoroughfare.

## Queens and the Crescents

Many English cities of comparable size have as many as twenty conservation areas, but Belfast does not at present have even one. At the end of last year the Minister for the Environment, Richard Needham, announced that the Queen's area of Belfast would be declared a conservation area later this year — more than a decade since it was first proposed.

This announcement followed concerted action by the residents and businesses of Upper and Lower Crescents, who commissioned a report from Riordan Burns Associates. The report argued forcefully for a coordinated repair and painting scheme in the Crescents, along the lines of similar schemes across the water but so far never tried here. Its intention was to rescue the area from its present rather dilapidated condition and allow it to be viewed as an architectural entity as it is the only example of coordinated regency town planning in Belfast. The Society supported the aims of the Crescent Association and enlisted the backing of the Victorian Society in anticipation of a difficult battle to prevent a road scheme being driven along Lower Crescent and through the Crescent Arts Centre (former Victoria College) which terminates the group.

The Crescent Association campaign has been successful in averting the demolition threat — the Centre is now to be listed, and the Minister has given an assurance that the road plan will not proceed — but the problem of financing long term repairs remains.

The Society remains involved in the Association's campaign, and is delighted that Belfast is to get its first conservation area; however, it is also pressing for more areas to be designated, and is involved currently in discussion over the Belfast Urban Area Plan, which could provide the framework for such designations.

## The Ace Team

The Society manages a small team of building workers financed by ACE grants to carry out holding repairs on listed buildings at risk.

At the beginning of 1985 the team was repairing roof timbers, reslating and treating dry rot at the former Sullivan School in Holywood. The South Eastern Education and Library Board, which

funded the work, intends now to convert the School into a library, but restrictions on their finances have meant that no date has yet been set for the conversion work. In the year since our team left, the vacant building has had a number of windows smashed by vandals, but with the shell of the building "enveloped", its future is as secure as can be expected for the time being.

A short scheme at Scotch Street, Downpatrick involved the reinstatement of a decorative cobbled footpath for the Roads Service; there are similar pavements in other towns (notably a bizarre one in the Square at Comber), and we hope it may be possible to carry out more work of this kind before they are lost.

Most of the summer was spent near Cookstown. At Lissan House, a substantial Georgian building with a massive central roof valley that had been causing problems of water penetration and rot for many years, re-roofing of the central valley was carried out, including alterations to rainwater outlets, treatment of rot and replastering of affected areas internally. Also in Cookstown, the former Railway Station in Molesworth Street has been re-roofed as a preliminary stage in the conversion of the building into a museum by the local council; it had been derelict for some years, and our scheme was a strong 'carrot' in persuading the Council to consider the new use.

Another scheme near Cookstown was Tullyhogue Priory, a Victorian building with ornamental bargeboards to a row of dormers; derelict for many years, its owners had been considering trying to get it delisted and demolished, but after discussions they agreed to its refurbishment, and are now enthusiastically looking forward to carrying out internal improvements and moving into it. Our work was restricted as usual to "enveloping" and making the building weathertight; the remainder of the restoration will be carried out by a local contractor, and another building has been saved from the bulldozer.

## Historic Building Bureau

*We would welcome suggestions for inclusion in future newsletters of important buildings which are currently vacant or derelict, in the hope that drawing public attention to them in this way may help to generate new uses and fresh life for them.*

**Samaritan Hospital:** The opening of the City Hospital tower block in Belfast has resulted in the closure of smaller hospitals, notably the fine Samaritan Hospital (built 1873), the Haypark Hospital (formerly a private house and built of stone) and the Claremont Street Hospital (a substantial Victorian brick terrace). These are being offered to government departments but may well be in need of private buyers before long.

**Coleraine Courthouse:** Designed by Stewart Gordon, County Surveyor, in 1852, this stone Greek Revival building with fluted Doric columns and pediment has recently been vacated by the courts for new premises.

**Kiltonga Quaker Church:** This very modest little barn-type church, with the sagging remains of its roof covered in tiny Tullycavey slates, is lying in a ruined condition near Newtownards. It could possibly be adapted to make an unusual house.

**Former Catholic Church, Donaghadee:** Dated 1845, this Gothick chapel has been derelict since 1972, but is small and simple enough to be adapted to domestic or commercial uses and is in the centre of the town.

## Does Belfast need more open space?

In the city where several buildings every month seem to be demolished in order to provide lucrative "temporary" car parking, so that some streets are now more gap than building, it is tempting to wonder whether Belfast **needs** more open space. Yet the DoE in its wisdom has decided that more demolition would make a "significant statement" and stimulate investment in what is left. To this end two areas were earmarked last year for vesting and clearance and the results of inquiries into the vesting orders are currently awaited.

The first is a small area (mainly private car park at present) off Amelia Street which has little to commend it in its present form — although equally it seems too small and off the beaten track to provide a useful park. The second is more contentious: an area in front of St Anne's Cathedral, involving part of the frontage to Donegall Street and along Church Street and Long Lane to North Street is to be cleared to provide space for trees and — yes — more cars. The area identified contains no listed buildings, although nos. 56 and 58 Donegall Street were built in 1793 — unfortunately much altered — by Roger Mulholland, no. 20 Church Street has an attractive Edwardian stucco front with leaded glass, and Bennet Building is a substantial and little altered inter-war building.

There is not a lot to fight for architecturally in the area, although the entry to Long Lane has considerable character, add the street layout is 18th-century. Nevertheless redevelopment of the gap sites on Long Lane and Donegall Street would seem a much more positive way of injecting life into a small area that already contains many small businesses occupying much-needed low-rental commercial accommodation. Thomas Drew does seem to have envisaged a small open space in front of the Cathedral (from his perspectives), but there is a danger that with the extent of clearance in the area, St Annes will be left like a solitary currant in a rather sparse plum-pudding.

## Briefings:

### The Queen's architecture school wins reprieve

Threatened with closure by the University Grants Committee and the National Advisory Body, Queen's fought a vigorous campaign of opposition supported by the Society, the Royal Society of Ulster Architects, the Association of University Teachers, and the Northern Ireland Assembly. The UGC granted a reprieve on condition 'that by the end of 1986 the university puts forward an acceptable plan to improve the quality of the department.'

### Conor' Studio

The Society has been monitoring possible changes to 11a Stranmillis Road, which was the studio of the painter, William Conor. Although it should come into the new Conservation Area, there was concern that a request for change of use might alter the building before that, but the Society is now assured that there is no real danger.

### Urban Area Plan

Members of the Society will be making detailed comments on a variety of aspects as part of the consultation process for the Belfast Urban Area Plan.

### Magee College

The Society objected to a proposal to build in front of Magee College Londonderry; the planning application was withdrawn and the proposal shelved but permission was granted for the erection of temporary classrooms for a period of one year. The society will observe this to ensure that they do not become a permanent fixture.

### Signs on terraces

Hoardings and plastic and neon signs have been appearing on some rather good Lisburn Road terraces, often without consent. The Society has taken action to try to prevent unnecessary changes of appearance on this Belfast road.

## What they said

'Moira, voted last year as Britain's prettiest village, is to have an 'Ulster says No' banner strung across the Main Street.

Official Unionist councillor Mr. Jim Dillon said the banner would not only get the message of opposition to the Anglo-Irish deal across, but would further brighten the award-winning village.'

*Belfast Telegraph*

'It is interesting to conject that if we all lived in Russia or China the 500 Cairnshill houses would be now complete, 500 families would now have a roof over their heads and many hundreds of construction workers would have had years of employment instead of languishing on the dole queues'

*Mr. Fred Fraser, Managing Director of Fraser Developments, on the estate of Tudor style houses being built outside the stop line.*

'You can understand why people might want to keep the red kiosk in areas in London, like outside Westminster or along the Mall, but your imagination would be a bit stretched to think of areas in Belfast where people may want the old boxes retained . . . But already BT has received more than 50 queries from Ulster people interested in buying a red kiosk before they disappear from the provinces's streets. People want them for an amazing variety of purposes. I was talking to one person who wanted to use the kiosk as a shower unit'

*British Telecom spokesman on the last call for red telephone kiosks.*

'A very small crock of gold'

*Chris Patten on the £150,000 annual budget for listed churches in Northern Ireland.*

## APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

The Society depends on an active membership for its effectiveness. Members can help in its work in many ways — by monitoring planning applications, for example, or drawing attention to undesirable development. The Society organises regular outings, expeditions, lectures and social events. Members also enjoy the privilege of buying all the Society's publications at a 25% discount (see overleaf for a full list).

To: The Secretary,  
Ulster Architectural Heritage Society  
181A Stranmillis Road  
Belfast 9.

I wish to become:

- |                             |                          |                 |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| a full member               | <input type="checkbox"/> | £4.00 herewith. |
| husband and wife membership | <input type="checkbox"/> | £6.00 herewith  |
| senior citizens             | <input type="checkbox"/> | £2.00 herewith  |
| an under-25 member          | <input type="checkbox"/> | £1.00 herewith  |
| a life member               | <input type="checkbox"/> | £60.00 herewith |

completed banker's order herewith

completed deed of covenant herewith

(name) .....

(address) .....

.....

## BANKER'S ORDER

To (Banker) .....

To (Branch) .....

Please pay to the account of the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, Northern Bank Ltd., Donegal Square North branch, the sum of £ ....., my subscription until 31st December this year, and thereafter the sum of £ ..... on each 1st January till further notice.

(signature) .....

(address) .....

.....

(date) .....19 .....

## ULSTER ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

### BOOKS, MONOGRAPHS AND ESSAYS

An Introduction to Ulster Architecture .....	£3.00
An Introduction to Modern Ulster Architecture .....	£3.00
Fishmongers' Company in Ulster .....	£4.80
Moneymore and Draperstown .....	£4.00
Irish Church Monuments, 1570—1880 .....	£3.00
J.J. McCarthy and the Gothic Revival in Ireland .....	£3.00
Palm House and Botanic Gardens, Belfast .....	£2.00
Northern Gardens .....	£1.00
The Diamond as Big as a Square .....	£1.50
Mausolea in Ulster .....	£1.00
Classical Churches in Ulster .....	£1.60
Roger Mulholland, Architect, of Belfast .....	£0.80
Neoclassicism in Ulster .....	£0.50
Architectural Schizophrenia .....	£1.60
Malone House .....	£1.20
The Workhouses of Ulster .....	£1.60
Ballywalter Park .....	£2.50
Clandeboyne .....	£2.50

### LISTS AND SURVEYS

1. Queen's University area of Belfast (1975) .....	£2.40
2. Lisburn .....	£1.20
3. Banbridge .....	£1.60
4. Portaferry and Strangford .....	Reprinting
5. Antrim and Ballymena .....	Reprinting
6. Downpatrick .....	£1.20
7. City of Derry .....	£2.00
8. Town of Monaghan .....	£1.80
9. West Antrim .....	£1.20
10. Craigavon (Omnibus volume) .....	£2.00
11. Joy Street area of Belfast .....	£1.20
12. Dungannon and Cookstown .....	£2.00
13. Glens of Antrim .....	£2.40
14. North Antrim .....	£2.40
15. Coleraine and Portstewart .....	£1.80
16. Enniskillen .....	£2.00
17. Towns and Villages of East Down .....	£1.60
18. Towns and Villages of Mid Down .....	£2.40
19. Island of Rathlin .....	£1.40
20. Mourne .....	£2.80
21. North Derry .....	£2.00
22. Donaghadee and Downpatrick .....	Reprinting
23. Carrickfergus .....	£2.00
24. Town of Cavan .....	£1.80
25. Rathfriland and Hilltown .....	£1.40
26. Bangor and Groomsport .....	£3.00

Orders for all the foregoing publications, and standing orders for future publications, may be sent to the Society at 181A Stranmillis Road, Belfast 9, and will be fulfilled subject to availability, and at the charges for postage and packing ruling at the date of order.

