

No 7

Winter 1990

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 1989.

Ulster
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Heritage
Society

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Secretary:

Mrs. Elizabeth Cavanagh (*resigned in 1989*), succeeded by Miss Joan Kinch

Our **front cover** shows the Ewart's building in Bedford Street, Belfast, behind which a high-rise development is proposed.

The **back cover** shows 4-12 Joy Street, Belfast, restored by Hearth.

The Society is always looking for members interested in taking an active part in its activities. In particular, monitoring of planning applications in different areas, preparation of new lists, and assistance in organising outings are always appreciated.

If you would like to help in any of these ways, please contact the Secretary, Miss Joan Kinch, at Belfast 660809.

Editorial

Two issues continue to dominate the Society's agenda: the lack of conservation areas in Belfast to resist the development pressures of recent years, and the appalling rate of new building in the countryside. In both cases the quality of the replacement buildings falls within the Society's brief, but while the first concerns urban conservation and is at the heart of the Society's work, the second is primarily a matter for bodies like the Ulster Society for the Preservation of the Countryside, but often involves the loss of vernacular buildings. More new buildings are erected in the Ulster countryside than in any other planning region of the UK, and most are of an anonymous quality that merely suburbanises our lovely countryside, yet comment on individual cases is difficult. The Department's guidelines on 'Location, Siting and Design' were well-intentioned, but are not always followed, and in any case include anomalies — not all traditional buildings are set back from the road as the guide requires of new buildings, and the result is long suburban gardens and fences that would be better avoided.

The proposed rate of designation of Belfast's conservation areas is ridiculously slow, and to make matters worse development is proceeding apace in the few areas proposed at present. About one eighth of the proposed Linen Conservation Area is the subject of planning applications submitted and approved since the area was suggested about two years ago, while most of the remaining 18th century buildings in the St. Anne's Conservation Area have been demolished by the DoE in readiness for the designation of the conservation area!

During 1989, the death occurred of Professor Estyn Evans, one of the Society's founding members and guiding lights. Professor Evans was one of the first people to write authoritatively on the Province's cultural and architectural heritage, and his influence on the way we perceive our culture has been enormous. On a happier note, our President received a Knighthood in the New Year's Honours, and as Sir Charles Brett he will no doubt continue to campaign vigorously for a better architectural environment for Northern Ireland.

Although this issue of the Newsletter is concerned with the events of the calendar year 1989, the Society has been involved during 1990 in a number of major campaigns not covered in these pages — notably the problems raised by new high-rise developments in central Belfast. We will report on these in the near future.

The Ewart's Building

The Society viewed with concern a planning application in April 1989 to develop the site behind the listed Ewart's head office building in Bedford Street, Belfast. Our concern was heightened by the apparent support given to the project by the Minister of Economic Development, Richard Needham, who unveiled the plans. Mr. Needham also has responsibility for planning in Belfast, and at the time of the ceremony the planning application was still under consideration.

The listed building on the site, designed by James Hamilton of Glasgow in 1869 with an extension by James Ewart in 1883, was built for the Bedford Street Weaving Company and later acquired by Ewart's. The Society was pleased to learn that this was to be retained in the re-development but concerned that no attempt was made to integrate the listed building into the overall development.

We opposed the plan because it was out of scale with the listed buildings on the site and with the adjacent Ulster Hall and Bryson House, two attractive listed buildings. The Society believes that high-rise blocks are inappropriate in central Belfast and that no more should be erected, particularly on sites close to the City Hall. The site is within the proposed Linen Conservation Area, which will probably be designated in 1992, and the development will rise from four storeys on Bedford Street to seventeen storeys at the rear of the site.

The Society was not opposed to development on the site in principle, but to the proposed plan. We were dismayed to learn that planning permission was granted without any major changes being requested by the planning authorities. At the Society's AGM in February 1990, the President said he believed that in time it would become Belfast's most hated building. It remains to be seen whether or not the prediction will come true.

Hollywood

In August 1989 the Catholic Church of St. Colmcille's in Hollywood was gutted in a fire which shocked local residents of all religions. The church is a very important landmark, and the stone shell of the church and its tower fortunately have survived, although as we go to press we understand no firm proposals exist for restoration and it is still possible that a new church will be built in their place, which would be unfortunate.

Restoration, Pastiche or Modern?

In recent years the Society has been greatly concerned about Royal Avenue, Belfast, which until twenty years ago had been a very complete late Victorian development. The impact of the Castlecourt scheme has changed the character of the street dramatically, and the process has not stopped, for developers are seeking to demolish other buildings. Of particular concern this year has been a series of applications to redevelop Nos.58-66 Royal Avenue. The owners lodged no fewer than four applications, ranging from redevelopment in contemporary idiom to a form of pastiche based on neighbouring buildings. Two of the modernist options were refused and went through the Planning Appeal process where the Society was to have been represented as Third Party objector, but in the event the DoE approved a replica facade and the appeals were withdrawn.

Although many people would expect the Society to be satisfied with this outcome, we feel in fact that this is perhaps the worst of all possible decisions, since it neither restores a listed building nor produces an interesting modern building. On the whole, we feel that in this context restoration should have been insisted upon; we recognise that the building was not in good condition as a result of neglect, but the new owner presumably purchased it in full knowledge of this condition and of its listed status, and should therefore have been prepared to restore it. The danger is that developers will now assume that future permissions will be forthcoming if only they neglect their listed buildings long enough so that they can claim that restoration is no longer economically viable.

The Society's committee, and indeed the architectural profession as a whole, is divided on the issue of pastiche, and this is only one of a number of such cases where discussion is heated and lengthy; but we feel certain that, wherever possible, listed buildings should be restored rather than demolished.

The Northern Ireland Building Record

The Northern Ireland Building Record Project was established in 1985 as a joint venture between the Institute of Irish Studies at Queen's University, the Irish Architectural Archive in Dublin, and the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland. Its aim was to explore the feasibility of establishing a record of historic buildings in Northern Ireland that would be accessible to the public and similar in function and organisation to the archives which

already exist in other parts of the U.K. and in the Republic of Ireland. Funds for the project were provided by the Esme Mitchell Trust, the DoENI, and latterly by the Baring Foundation, and these allowed for the employment of two research workers based at the Institute of Irish Studies from 1985 to 1988.

Work on the subject was guided by a distinguished management committee under the chairmanship of Professor R. H. Buchanan. The two research workers devised a system of cataloguing, indexing and storage appropriate to the material collected in the course of their work, and also established the range and availability of relevant material held in other institutions in Northern Ireland. Among the more important records gathered were the office drawings of two leading twentieth century architects in Ulster, John MacGeagh and Philip Bell.

In July 1989, the management committee compiled an illustrated report on the feasibility study, and recommended 'that government should be urged to establish a National Monuments Record for Northern Ireland equivalent to those already in existence in other parts of the U.K., as an essential and complementary service to the existing provision for historic monuments and buildings'. The Society has pressed for such a facility since its inception, and we were particularly gratified that the Minister responsible, Peter Bottomley, chose our 1990 AGM to announce the Government's commitment to setting up the Record.

Northern Ireland Environment Link

A group of organisations concerned with the built and the natural environment has been meeting together informally for several years to discuss common concerns. The UAHS has been involved since its inception. It was felt that the group should form itself into a properly constituted body whose main aim would be to make the voluntary sector more effective. After a great deal of consideration about the nature of its constitution, membership and name, the new body formally came into being on 12 December 1989.

NIEL will function as a linking organisation to co-ordinate the views of the voluntary sector concerning major environmental issues within Northern Ireland. By forming a vocal, independent and broadly based group, it is hoped that environmental issues will be kept to the forefront of public consciousness and debate. During the embryonic stage of NIEL, funding was provided by the World Wildlife Fund. This enabled the group to employ a Development Officer and commission a research report into conservation law and practice in Northern Ireland and how to increase its effectiveness.



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BUILDING CONTRACTORS

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Hearth

Hearth is the housing association managed jointly by the Society and the National Trust to restore historic buildings in the province which are at risk of demolition. In the last newsletter, the scheme being carried out at 36-46 Hamilton Street was described. Throughout 1989 it was the main scheme Hearth was involved with, and early in 1990 it was put on the market. The six Georgian (well, actually very early Victorian) houses attracted considerable interest, since not only are they amongst the oldest houses in the city but they are probably the nearest owner-occupied houses to the city centre, and all have very elegant and spacious main rooms with open fires and working shutters fully restored. They fetched prices well above the asking price, although at the time of going to press Hearth is not certain whether it will receive sufficient grant aid to cover all its costs on what was inevitably a very expensive scheme because of the size and initially very badly vandalised state of the houses. Nevertheless the scheme has been well worth while for its contribution to the townscape of the last remaining "Georgian" area of the city. The association offered a discount to local people, and was particularly pleased that the purchaser of No 42 had been born in it, as had her mother and aunt; they had been rehoused by the Executive to permit redevelopment of the terrace, and were delighted to be able to move back to it.

The scheme at Hamilton Street complements the earlier excellent restoration of 14-26 Joy Street by the Housing Executive, which it faces, and Hearth is currently working on another scheme to provide a "book end" at the other end of the terrace. Nos 4-12 Joy Street were about to be sold by the Executive to permit office development on the site, but Hearth was able to obtain financial support from Housing Associations Branch of the DoE to enable it to restore the houses for rental, and that scheme commenced early in 1989.

Nos.4-12 Joy Street are slightly later than the other two terraces, dating from about 1845, and are distinctly more modern in style and detail; the brickwork is rendered, with stucco window surrounds and doorcases of relatively elaborate design, while internally the doors have four panels rather than six, and the staircases do not have the ramped handrails of the earlier houses. No.8 is a "ghost house", being now only an alley door, though there was at one time a small shop in the back of the alley which presumably was known as No.8. No.12 was bombed during the 1970s, and demolished, while No.10 was badly shaken as a result of the bomb and later lack of maintenance.



4-12 Joy Street before restoration.

The restoration, due for completion in the spring of 1990, has been relatively straightforward in Nos.4 and 6, but the piling operations necessary to put a new structure back at No.12 undermined the already fragile house at No.10 and following some disturbing movement in its structure it was reluctantly decided that it would be best to demolish it in the interests of safety. Soil conditions in the Markets area are particularly bad, the normal Belfast sloop being overlaid by made-up ground following the reclamation of land from Joy's paper mill in the 1830s, and the cramped site conditions made it difficult to use large machinery for the piling. The structural engineer involved graphically described the soil as like standing on a hot water bottle — you shift your weight and another bit bounces up and down for a while till it settles. No. 10 has been rebuilt in replica, and the new house at No.12 provides a ground floor flat and a maisonette; the completed terrace helps to provide the setting for the major terrace at Nos.14-26.

Since Hearth takes on properties which almost by definition are unlikely to be profitable, or which are certainly not considered likely to be profitable by the ordinary developer, it relies heavily on grant aid, either from Housing Associations Branch of the DoE for its rental schemes, or from the Housing Executive and Historic Monuments and Buildings Branch of the DoE for its revolving fund work. Even with grant aid, many of the projects Hearth feels are worthwhile are still extremely risky from a financial point of view, and it has only been possible to undertake the revolving fund

schemes by building up a capital reserve to cover possible losses. With the transfer of conservation area responsibilities from Historic Buildings Branch of the DoE to the Planning Service, increased funding has become available for conservation areas, and in April 1989 Hearth received a generous grant from the DoE of £125,000, which is to be spent on restoration of problem buildings in the province's conservation areas. It is hoped that it will be possible to add to this fund, and to establish it as a separate organisation under the Hearth umbrella. Negotiations and purchase of property can take time, and the fruits of the new grant will not be seen for some time, but already the grant has enabled the purchase of property in Cushendall and negotiations are well advanced to purchase a sizeable group of buildings in Armagh.

Drogheda Grammar School

In general, although the Society continues to press for improved legislation for the province (such as the repairs notices which it is hoped will be introduced before the end of 1990), Northern Ireland is fortunate compared to the South in the strength of its listed buildings legislation. The fate of Drogheda Grammar School, much of which dates from the 1730s, seemed typical of that of many historical buildings in Ireland: acquired by a business consortium about 1980 in fair condition, it had been neglected, vandalised, and was eventually demolished overnight in July 1989. The owners faced a maximum fine of £10,000 but were going to save extensive restoration costs, and their property had probably doubled in value to some £½ million following the demolition.

Then the story becomes less typical; a court injunction has been placed on the site compelling the owners not to remove the rubble, in order to facilitate the rebuilding of the facade, and the new National Heritage Council established in 1988 by Charles Haughey is exploring options for the rebuilding of the school. Tax incentives have already been introduced for restoration of historic buildings by owner occupiers, and Senator David Norris is mooting a Receiver of Derelict Buildings to deal with such cases. Such an official would have powers to take buildings into receivership if their owners persistently neglected them, would renovate them at public expense and sell them back to the original owners at cost or put them on the market on a non-profit basis. It will be interesting to see if the NHC can make such proposals a reality.

The Old School House, Newtownbreda

During the year the Society supported efforts to retain the Old School House situated in the heart of Newtownbreda village, on the outskirts of Belfast. The School House, at 15 Newtownbreda Road, is a modest stone, single-storey building which has been used as a dwelling for some time, set in picturesque gardens. A proposal was submitted to the Planning Service in March to demolish with a view to putting the open site up for sale for development.

It was brought to the Society's notice that local residents were objecting to the loss of the Old School House as an important part of the heritage of the village. The Society wrote to the Planning Service objecting to the demolition, and also wrote to the Historic Monuments and Buildings Branch of the DoE requesting that the property be listed. As the summer approached, local Councillors added their weight to the campaign. However, the HMBB recommended that the building was not of sufficient historical or architectural merit to warrant its listing and therefore they would not object to demolition.

Undoubtedly due to the number and quality of objections raised to the application, the DoE Planning Service withheld a decision on the application through the summer as the future of the School House was debated. It was eventually learned in November that the application had been withdrawn and that the School House had been sold for renovation as a single dwelling.

Whilst the Society often acts and campaigns in parallel with the HMBB, this is an example of the occasions that arise where the Society is active in campaigning for individual buildings and groups which are important to their particular localities, but which in the Department's opinion are not worthy of statutory protection.

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This small building company was set up some years ago under the auspices of the UAHS, but is now financially independent. Currently it has a workforce of fifteen people, some of whom are employed under the ACE training scheme, and continues to make a valuable contribution to the restoration of buildings of architectural merit in the province.

In October 1988, the building team moved onto the Belfast Gasworks site. The first task was to secure the buildings that were not being demolished and then to clear the former engineering workshops and equip them as a base for the company. Additional machinery and equipment was purchased during the year and a joinery workshop installed. Costings were then prepared for restoration of two buildings on the site — the Meter House and the Klondyke building. Despite problems with vandalism Phase 2, which involves re-roofing the Klondyke building, progressed well. To date no decision to restore the Meter House has been taken by the company's clients, Laganside Development Corporation.

The restoration of Moneypenny's Lockhouse, on the Lagan Canal near Portadown, began in April. The building was re-roofed and new windows were manufactured. At present, planning permission is awaited for an extension to the lockhouse. It is hoped that restoration will be completed in 1990. The team also began work on the North Lodge at Castleward at the end of the summer, and restoration is now complete. In February 1989, work was also completed on Phase 1 at Hamilton Street, Belfast, for Hearth, which was described in last year's Newsletter.



The Klondyke Building.

Downpatrick

The etiquette of priority between government departments in the province led to considerable controversy towards the end of 1989 over the future of a terrace of mostly 18th century buildings at 34 - 58 Irish Street, in the conservation area of Downpatrick. About 1980 this group had been recommended by the HBC for listing, but the listing could not be implemented because of road plans which involved their demolition. When the road plan was abandoned in 1986 the Housing Executive declared an interest in the houses and vested them for redevelopment. In the meantime the conservation area had been declared, and the legislation controlling demolition in conservation areas introduced. The Society, as well as several local councillors, has argued that the buildings should be restored rather than replaced, in view of the Department's obligation to ensure that any development 'enhances' the conservation area and the fact that replacement of good 18th century buildings in a conservation area can hardly, almost by definition, be enhancement. Hearth, with the new muscle of its conservation area revolving fund, has offered to purchase and restore the houses, but as we go to press the Housing Executive is revising its scheme for a new terrace, and the future of the houses remains unresolved.



Irish Street, Downpatrick.

Comeback for Canals

A scheme to reopen the Ballinamore and Ballyconnell Canal, which would re-link the Shannon and Erne systems, is scheduled to start in the very near future and will require only three good seasons for completion. As most of the locks are in an extremely poor condition, they will be replaced, and the canal will be widened to accommodate two-way traffic. Former water supply problems will be overcome by pumping water up from the Shannon, and the inconvenience of travelling through a flight of seven locks in the short section of rise from the Shannon will be eased by the use of automatic gates and sluices operated by a remote control mechanism. Where possible, work will be carried out from one bank only, to ensure the retention of as much of the original habitat as possible.

The estimated cost of the project, some £25m, is to be made available through the International Fund for Ireland, the European Community, the Electricity Supply Board and the Government of the Republic of Ireland. An investment appraisal study has satisfied the IFI that there will be a substantial return on the capital investment. As a means of transport, in competition with road and rail networks, the Irish canals were not an economic success. However, in recent years, because they have the potential to provide an excellent environment for relaxing holidays, they are proving to be economically viable. In some instances, this will be for the first time in their existence; and the return on the original public investment may be realised more than 150 years after it was made!

The very positive act of restoring the Ballinamore and Ballyconnell Canal may be followed by the refurbishment of other waterways. Serious consideration is being given to reopening the Ulster Canal and, although some sections have been filled in, digging out and re-watering present few technical difficulties, the reacquisition of the land may be problematic. In general, the locks and bridges are in excellent condition, but there is a major problem in that they are too narrow to facilitate two-way traffic. So preservation and use are, or may be, in conflict. One possible compromise might be to preserve and use the masonry structure without alteration, but widen the canal to accommodate two-way traffic. Plans for reopening the Newry Canal and the Coalisland Canal are in progress, so the province may see the rebirth of its canal network.

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Congratulations

The former Waterside Railway Station at Bonds Hill, Londonderry (built by John Lanyon in 1883-99) was bombed in 1972, resulting in the destruction of the central part of the building. It was not until 1986 that a scheme was fully agreed for a development which included offices and a distribution centre, restoring the remaining portions of the original structure with a modern central glazed link. An exceptional feature is the retention of the massive train shed roof at the rear. The restoration by Caroline Dickson, a former committee member of the Society, received a Europa Nostra Award in 1989.

The Old Mill at Dundonald, for many years used as dog boarding kennels, has been restored as a coffee and gift shop, with the old machinery being restored by Fred Hamond. Built in 1752 as a linen mill, it boasts one of the largest surviving water wheels in Ireland, at 32 ft. diameter. Work has also gone on at two mills with water wheels at Bushmills.

The former Town Hall in Downpatrick, built by William Batt in 1872 at an important junction of the town, has been restored following a fire in 1982, and has now opened as an attractive Arts Centre, to designs by Mervyn Brown.

A happy outcome has emerged from concern over the two limestone railway bridges at Carnlough, and the structures have now been strengthened and cleaned. At the Manor House in Moneymore (formerly the Agent's House), a new porch has replaced an earlier addition.

Rock Mills, Strand Road, Londonderry, a former flour mill and bakery of 1846, occupies a prominent position overlooking the River Foyle at Rock Quay. After all production ceased, there were plans to demolish the complex, but this was averted when a scheme was agreed to convert the property for Student Housing Association (SHAC).

Although hidden from the Strand Road by new apartments which are part of the development, the old warehouse still dominates the river frontage.

BELFAST RECORDER & EARLY MUSIC SOCIETY is expanding, and wants to recruit up to 40 new members. If you play the recorder (and any other instrument), or sing, and want to help us perform music of all periods, cultures, and styles, then come along to one of our practices, or contact the band tutor (David Z. Crookes, 94 Landsdowne Road, Belfast BT15 4AB, tel. 772074).

PRACTICES: Last Wednesday of each month in St. Mary Magdalene Church Hall, Donegall Pass, at 8.00 pm, AND second Saturday of each month in Carr's Glen Primary School, Oldpark Road, at 2.45 pm.

DON'T BE NERVOUS: come along and enjoy yourself!

Activities 1989

The customary opening lecture was given on 26 January in the Ulster Museum by Conall O Cathain of the Department of Architecture and Planning at Queen's University, with the title of "Ireland's Oldest Architectural Tradition". He was much involved in the feasibility study on Navan Fort, and spoke on Bronze Age and Iron Age architecture and the difference between literary and archaeological evidence. In a departure from the past, the Annual General Meeting on 22 February was held in the Elmwood Hall, Belfast. The guest speaker was the president of the Royal Society of Ulster Architects, Larry Thompson. The meeting was well attended, but the acoustics were difficult.

On 12 March, Brian McKee took two coaches on a tour illustrating the growth of "Belfast and its Industries". This was followed by an open day at Clondeboye on 29 April. The Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava had gone to great trouble to arrange a panel of distinguished experts. It was also interesting to meet the Conservation Volunteers again, and to see the results of their work in the estate.

Seventy-four members took part in a wide-ranging and enjoyable weekend in the Midlands of Ireland on 27-28 May, with visits to buildings in Westmeath, Offaly and Laois. On Saturday, we began with Belvedere, attributed to Richard Castle. It contains fine plasterwork, and in the grounds is the largest purpose-built "ruin" in Ireland. In the afternoon, members visited Birr Castle and demesne, where they saw what was once the world's largest telescope. Two other well-known houses, Emo Court and Ballyfin House, were visited on Sunday.

The "Mourne Meander" led by Dawson Stelfox on 7 June proved immensely popular. In bright sunshine, the day began at Dundrum Castle, from where we went to Ian Campbell's timber tea house in Tollymore Park. From Bryansford village we went to the Silent Valley, and in the afternoon we strolled around Annalong harbour, ending an enjoyable day with a conducted tour of the reconstructed corn mill. On 1 July, in the company of Roger Weatherup, curator of Armagh County Museum, some 60 members walked along the Mall and up to St. Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral. After lunch, we drove to St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Cathedral, and then on to look at the ruins of the Franciscan Friary and the Palace and Chapel.

The Children's Outing and Barbeque at Hillsborough on 16 August was supported by a record number of 30 children and 18 adults. Due to the ingenuity of Marion Meek and Primrose Wilson,

the day was enjoyed by one and all, and there was a strong call for more children's events to be held in conjunction with our scheduled outings. Such was the popularity of the tour of Lambeg and Hilden in 1987 that Brian Mackey led a repeat visit on 19 August. The same ground was covered, including visits to Lambeg Parish Church, Chrome Hill and — of course — the real ale brewery.

On 23 September, "A Day in Fermanagh" began with Laurence Manogue conducting members around several churches in and near Enniskillen. After lunch in the Ardhowen Centre, we heard an informed and highly entertaining talk from Richard Pierce on "Great Houses of Fermanagh". "A Powerful Day" was the title for the outing on 15 October when, following a buffet lunch in the Bleach House at Dunadry Inn, members set out on foot to see examples of water power in the neighbourhood. The power of water was further demonstrated by the torrential rain, and members tended to slip away as they became saturated.

On 19 October, in the Ulster Museum, Richard Wood addressed the Society on "Fota Island: Irish Heritage at Risk". The November lecture, which forms part of the Belfast Festival at Queen's, was given by the well-known author Mark Bence-Jones on "Some Great Irish Houses". On 13 November, a capacity audience at the Ulster Museum heard many amusing anecdotes about these houses and their eccentric occupants. Our Christmas event was held at Lisburn Museum on 7 December under the title "With Glass in Mind". Seasonal glasses of wine were preceded by an informative and evangelizing lecture on the joys of stained glass from Colin Hatrick, amply illustrated by slides from Ireland, and from the holy sites of Israel.

Seacourt

One of the finest buildings in Bangor is Seacourt, a villa built about 1865 for the linen merchant Foster Connor and later bought by S. C. Davidson, the founder of the Sirocco Works. Since 1972 it has been a local Teachers' Centre, but with budget cutbacks, the South Eastern Education and Library Board decided to sell it. Despite pleas to North Down Borough Council that it should purchase the building for use as an arts centre or museum for Bangor, the building was sold at auction early in 1990 to a group of businessmen, and development of the fine gardens, which had been intact, now seems inevitable. Listing should preserve the main structure, but its future use remains uncertain.

Traditional Road and Footpath Materials

During the year, the Society has raised the question of the retention of traditional road and footpath materials. These have changed over the years, but if we look back perhaps to the turn of the century we would find some or more of the following:

Cobbles are one of the oldest materials used, and tend to be in older and poorer districts. Naturally rounded stones and rocks may be up to 6 inches in diameter. The last remaining examples are in Chater Street at the back of the Transport Museum in Witham Street (very handy for photographing old vehicles in period) and in the Cattle Market (now a car park) in Oxford Street.

Square Setts were stone dressed to roughly 9 inch cubes, and were used extensively throughout the city centre and main streets. The former tramway system rails were laid in broad bands of these setts, and with the post-war closure of the tramway system most square setts disappeared. The only extensive area left is in the Old Town area of Hill Street and Gordon Street, off Waring Street.

Wood Blocks of a similar size were laid instead of square setts outside hospitals, churches and so on to reduce the noise levels produced by the steel-rimmed wheels of large drawn vehicles. None are now left *in situ*.

Granite Kerbs, especially of a Mourne granite, were common in all streets. Many roads and streets still have them, but they are being replaced by cheaper concrete kerbs on an ongoing basis, as recently in the Ormeau Road.

Blue Stone Pavers were used on some footways. The extent of their use is not clear, but they can still be found in South and East Belfast, sometimes in back passages. The area between Cromwell Road and Botanic Avenue has the largest surviving concentration.

The Society has raised two issues with the Divisional Roads Manager: the retention of areas where traditional road and footpath materials survive, and the re-use of materials salvaged where change is essential. Areas of setts and cobbles are obviously expensive to maintain, but they do contribute enormously to the character of historic areas. Some materials are already stored for possible re-use, especially granite kerbs, but regrettably there does not appear to be a coherent or responsible province-wide policy for these materials.

Celia Gray

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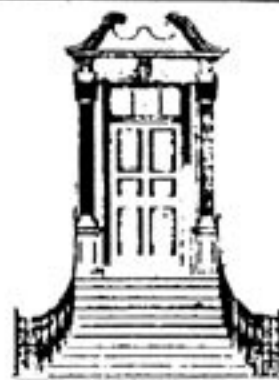


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Book Reviews

Crosbie, Jane: *A tour of North Down.*

Dallat, Cahal: *The Road to the Glens.*

Bell, Fergus Hanna: *Newry, Warrenpoint and Rostrevor.*

Spiers, Shella: *Under the Big Lamp.*

Friar's Bush Press, 1989. Each £4.95.

Friar's Bush Press has a long and honourable record of publishing books of old photographs which go far beyond simply serving a market trend for nostalgia but provide a fascinating insight into our not too distant past. The Brian Walker and Hugh Dixon brace of Belfast books **No Mean City** and **In Belfast Town** published in 1983 and 1984 respectively (and both reviewed in earlier issues of Heritage Newsletter) should be on the shelves of all Belfast building buffs already. The new posse of photographic studies, only some of which are listed here, work to a somewhat wider brief as they illustrate not only buildings but also landscapes, people and events. The photographs were taken mainly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the books all have good, brief introductions to the history and development of the area covered and short textual notes accompanying the photographs.

The photographs in the North Down volume, which covers Bangor, Groomsport, Donaghadee, Helen's Bay, Crawfordsburn and Holywood at the turn of the century, come from the Green collection held at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. The book offers much to drool over but there is also much to mourn. The losses can be easily identified by checking the buildings illustrated in the UAHS Bangor and Donaghadee lists or, of course, perambulating the streets death-defyingly with book in hand. Bangor railway station is sadly altered, and the wonderfully flamboyant Grand Hotel in Quay Street was demolished only about five years ago. However, not all is doom and gloom as the Tower House in Quay Street, which was built as the Custom House in 1637, has now been excellently restored as a tourist information and exhibition centre.

The Glens book, also using the Green collection as its source, naturally puts more emphasis on landscape and rural traditions. Browsing through the photographs of block-wheeled carts and fish sellers, the Scottish links are very evident and the feeling of the Glens as somehow a place apart is very atmospherically captured. From an architectural point of view, it is cheering to look at the Antrim Arms in Glenarm, knowing that it has recently been superbly restored as housing by Hearth, and indeed that Turnley's Tower in Cushendall is soon to be restored by Hearth also.

Newry has recently seen a surge of interest in its history and regeneration. It has much to be proud of as is well illustrated in Fergus Hanna Bell's selection of photographs taken this time from the Lawrence collection in the National Library in Dublin. The many fine churches, Thomas Duff's Courthouse, elegant houses and chunky warehouses evoke a town of much bustle and importance in the mid to late nineteenth century when these photographs were taken. Warrenpoint and Rostrevor, both also covered in this volume, convey a sleepier but delightful atmosphere. It is pleasing to see how much remains unchanged although some notable buildings, the imposing Quay Hotel for one, are no longer with us.

Carrickfergus, like Newry and Rostrevor a conservation area, is another town that is the scene of much regeneration and pride in its past. Carrickfergus Castle has long been recognised as a major monument, but in **Under the big lamp** Sheila Speers deliberately concentrates on the history and development of the town rather than regarding it as an adjunct to the Norman castle. The photographs, which come from a number of private collections as well as from the Welch, Green, Hogg and Lawrence collections, are described in some detail. Again a walk around Carrickfergus with this book and the 1978 UAHS Carrickfergus list would provide fascinating sport for the building and local history enthusiast. The picture is constantly changing and it is pleasing to note that in March of this year a recasting of the big lamp of the title was erected in High Street.

The authors and Friar's Bush Press are to be congratulated on these books which evoke so vividly our recent past. A little more detail on some of the buildings and perhaps some indication of their fate, where appropriate, would have been an added bonus. Perhaps all that must wait for another series based on before and after photographs? That can be an even more vivid way of highlighting successes and failures while pointing the way towards the sensitive handling of development in our towns and villages.

K.L.

Prints donated by Sean Hagan

Harold Thompson was a well-known County Armagh solicitor. He practised in Portadown from 1950 until his death in 1984. In addition, during that time he held posts as Coroner for North Armagh, Crown Solicitor for County Armagh and Solicitor to Armagh County Council. After his death a number of his colleagues commissioned, with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, a set of six prints in his memory. One of our members, Sean Hagan, has kindly donated a complete set of this limited edition to the Society. We may use the prints to adorn our office or dispose of them to raise funds for the UAHS. This gift is a very kind and thoughtful gesture, and much appreciated by us all.

Obituaries

St. Mary's Hall in Bank Street, Belfast, was demolished to make way for a new office development. Built in 1876, it hosted concerts, pantomimes, bazaars and dances for the Catholic community as well as political meetings addressed by such speakers as Eamon de Valera, Padraig Pearse and Joe Devlin.

Victoria Street in Belfast lost a good group of mostly four-storey brick and stucco buildings last year to make way for the proposed enlargement of Musgrave Street Police Station. Several of the buildings were of listable quality but were not listed in view of the proposed development, and a temporary striped hoarding has now replaced them. Another major group of demolitions in the city is ironically in what is now a conservation area around St. Anne's Cathedral. The buildings demolished there included several (admittedly mutilated) late 18th century houses by Roger Mulholland, again not listed, perhaps on account of the plans for an open space which the DoE is proposing.



Corner of Victoria Street and Ann Street before demolition.

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).

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