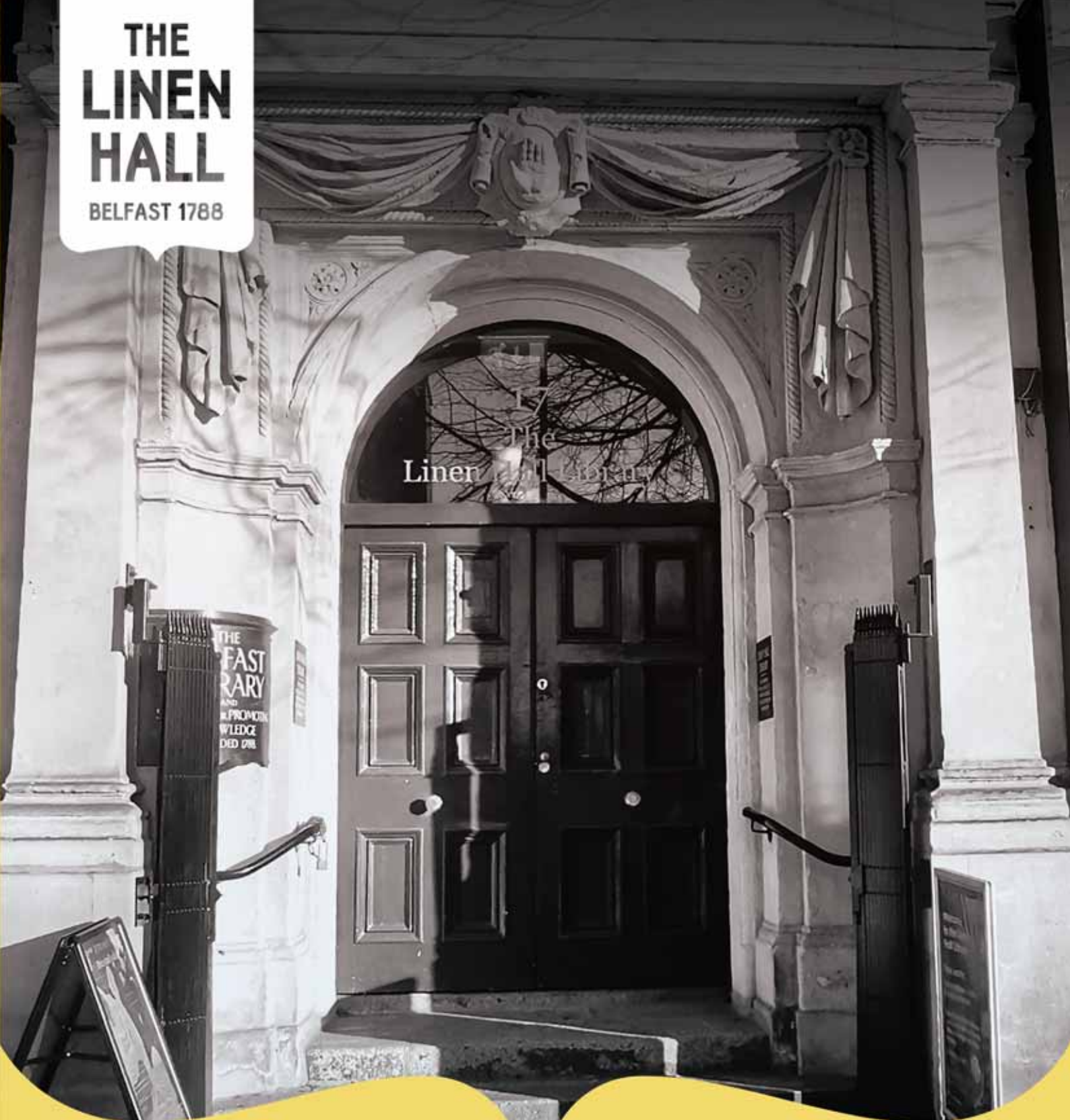


THE LINEN HALL

BELFAST 1788



THE LINEN HALL

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

The Linen Hall gratefully acknowledges the kind support of the following organisations:



Belfast
City Council



Idlewild Trust



An Roinn Gnóthai Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs
RECONCILIATION FUND

THE LINEN HALL

BELFAST 1788

THE
BELFAST
LIBRARY
AND
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
KNOWLEDGE
FOUNDED 1788.

LINEN HALL
LIBRARY
THE LIBRARY
WILL BE CLOSED TO
ADULTS (INCLUDING
ALL 19 CENTURIES OF
MEMBERSHIP)

17
The
Linen Hall Library

THE LINEN HALL

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



From hopeful lies to a hopeless reality.

sealed with a FIST

Many women in Northern Ireland exist in day to day fear of domestic violence.

Women's Aid can help.

24 Hour Helpline
028 90 331818
website: www.niwaf.org

Women's AID

WHEN HOME IS WHERE THE HURT IS

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It was a great honour to be elected as President of The Linen Hall in its 235th year. I am very grateful to my predecessor Dr Eamonn Hughes, who steered the Library through the very difficult circumstances of the pandemic. As an independent charity which depends particularly upon the generosity of its subscribing members, we faced a very threatening situation. However, thanks to the work of Eamonn and our indefatigable Director Julie Andrews, we weathered the storm.

We were deeply disappointed to be informed in May that our grant from the Department for Communities was being reduced with immediate effect by 33%. Since then, we have engaged with a large range of stakeholders and potential supporters, including senior figures in all five political parties. What was immediately clear at every meeting was the huge respect in which The Linen Hall is held right across the political spectrum. We are widely seen as a neutral space, but a forum for active debate where all views are welcome, in the tradition of our 18th century founders.

While we remain in a precarious financial situation, the Management Team has worked hard to stabilise our position. We have recently set up a strategy group to help us plan for the medium term, with regard both to setting our finances on a stronger footing and refreshing our vision of how we see the Library developing in the years ahead. The Finance Manager, Karen Law, provides all the necessary financial input, analysis and reporting.

Our new cultural programmer Patsy Horton put together a wonderful and varied programme of events throughout the year. These have been very well attended, and many of them are available to watch online.

We marked the 25th anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement with a series of panels which involved all the main parties, as well as community activists. Later in the year we had a project 'Borders and Boundaries' coordinated by Dr Melissa Baird, which brought together politicians, academics, writers, and athletes to reflect on the cultural, economic and other aspects of partition. We are grateful to the Department of Foreign Affairs Reconciliation Fund for their assistance.

One particular highlight of the year was an event chaired by Paul Muldoon, with Louis MacNeice's daughter Corinna and Michael and Edna Longley. There were also two drama productions, book launches by Lady Mary Peters, Carl Frampton and Michael Magee, a number of discussions with local authors, and numerous other events.

The Ulster-Scots writing competition continues to grow every year, and we value the support we receive from the Ulster-Scots Agency, and Foras na Gaeilge in the care and conservation of the Irish Language collection.

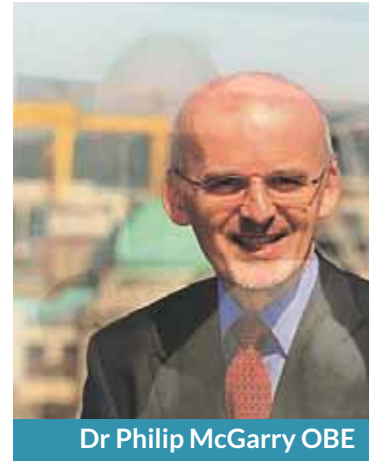
In April we ran a very successful charity fundraiser in Belfast City Hall featuring Adrian Dunbar. We were also very grateful to our stalwart supporter Dan Gordon, who curated an evening presenting readings from local playwrights, and then generously arranged a fundraising performance of *The Boat Factory* in the Grand Opera House.

We are grateful to broadcasters Mark Simpson, Kathy Clugston and Tara Mills for their participation in our programme and we appreciate the press for their ongoing support of our work.

Donations to our collections continue to expand at pace, under the watchful eye of Deputy Librarian Monica Cash, and we were delighted to receive a living archive from local crime writer Brian McGilloway, and also the archive of the late Baroness May Blood. Under the leadership of our Librarian Samantha McCombe, we continue the vital work of expanding (and where appropriate digitising) our collections and conserving and presenting our artefacts.

I would like to extend my thanks to all of our staff throughout the Library who have worked tirelessly throughout the year, demonstrating creativity, and energy, and also to our volunteers who bring an extra dimension to what we offer the public. Finally, I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude for your support during our recent fundraising campaign. Thanks to the generosity of our members and friends, we were able to raise an impressive £14,550.

There are challenges ahead, but I am confident that with our history, our ever-expanding range of activities and our excellent staff team, we shall continue to be a beacon for promoting knowledge and enlightenment values.



Dr Philip McGarry OBE

Director's Report

2023 brought both funding challenges and opportunities to The Linen Hall.

We were surprised to receive a massive cut in core funding from the Department for Communities of £82,000. Sustained lobbying was carried out by the President and Director with all political parties, and this helped to raise the profile of The Linen Hall and re-state our relevance and importance in local heritage, arts, and culture. We did receive additional funding for an Ulster-Scots digitisation project from the Department for Communities.

At the end of 2022 we received funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to look at a programme of events on the 25th anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. This took place in April and May 2023 and was tremendously successful. This programme considered origins, legacies and implementation of the Agreement and included discussion panels with politicians of all political opinions. Literary aspects were considered with a curated literary event by Dan Gordon and Ian McElhinney which took place in the Studio at the Grand Opera House. The Department of Foreign Affairs Reconciliation Fund funded a project in relation to Borders and Boundaries which took place in Autumn 2023. From our collections and the discussions with community organisations, we identified three broad themes which we found characterised people's experiences to frame our exhibition and events series: creation, conflict, and co-operation. This culminated in an events programme with high profile participants. At the end of 2023 we also learnt that we had been awarded funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs Reconciliation Fund for a student activism project which will take place in 2024.

At the end of 2023 The National Lottery Heritage fund awarded The Linen Hall £248,000 for the development of a feasibility study for Linen Hall 2. This will consider whether a second building is feasible for the housing of the NI Political Collection, along with world class research facilities; interpretative and museum space and a repository for oral histories. This is an important study to undertake to shape strategy for the future.

We continue to work with the Ulster-Scots Agency and Foras na Gaeilge to ensure the conservation and development of our Languages Collections. A third Ulster-Scots writing competition was developed in 2023 which was very successful, and conservation continued on the Gibson Collection. Foras na Gaeilge continued to fund conservation of our Irish Language Collection. At the end of 2023 we were delighted to receive funding from the British Council for an Irish Language/Breton poetry jukebox. This is in partnership with the Centre Culturel Irlandais in Paris and will culminate in events at the Etonnants Voyageurs Festival in St Malo in May 2024.

There has been a renewed focus on tours and 'green tourism'. We are pleased to report we have already achieved a bronze standard. During 2023 there were two fundraising events. I would like to thank Adrian Dunbar for generously supporting The Linen Hall through an in-conversation event with Tara Mills in Belfast City Hall. This was kindly supported by the High Sheriff, Dr John Kyle as he made The Linen Hall one of his charities for his year in office. In October, Dan Gordon and Michael Condron gave a performance of *The Boat Factory* in the Studio at the Grand Opera House. I would like to thank them and the Grand Opera House for collaborating with us.

Finally, I would like to thank the Board of Governors, staff and volunteers for their help and support throughout 2023. I have an excellent staff team and they work incredibly hard to make the organisation relevant, resilient, and sustainable and I am immensely proud to work with all of them.



Julie Andrews

I am pleased to report on Library collections for 2023.

2023 was a busy and productive year in relation to the collections, and thanks to the industry of the team much was achieved, some highlights of which are included below.

In the Autumn of 1786 extracts from three poems under the heading 'Fragments of Scotch Poetry' appeared in the Belfast Newsletter. No author was named for these fragments. Later, the Belfast Evening Post published under the heading 'Scotch Poetry' a poem entitled 'To a youth on his entering the world'. Although it carried a title, again no author was given. The author of the poetry in both newspapers was Robert Burns. Members will be aware that thanks to former Governor Andrew Gibson (1841-1931) we have one of the largest collections of Robert Burns outside of Scotland. Amassed towards the end of the 19th century, it was acquired for the city of Belfast in 1901 by public subscription and placed in the Linen Hall. In 2023, with generous funding from the Department for Communities, we were delighted to shine a light on this expansive and historically significant collection, and to explore the wider influences of Robert Burns present in the poetry of our early Belfast and Provincial printed books, and Ulster-Scots collection, through the major 'Fragments of Scotch Poetry' digitisation and online exhibition project. Contributors brought these collections to life by telling the fascinating stories of those who influenced Robert Burns, his popularity in Belfast and beyond, and enduring influence and relevance – from the Weaver poets to contemporary writers emulating his universal themes of love and nature, and language of everyday life. Spotlighting rare and unique volumes which have been digitally scanned for preservation, and conserved for posterity, 'Fragments of Scotch Poetry' is an inspiring insight into the social, historical, and linguistic importance of the poetry in our collections.

Generous funding from Foras na Gaeilge continued support for our Irish Language collection. In addition to continued conservational binding of newspapers, periodicals, and books, Foras funded the creation of digital surrogate copies of rare and unique treasures, including Bolg an Tsolair, the first magazine published in the Irish Language, and issues of the Shan Van Vocht, edited by Alice Milligan and Anna MacManus.

Continued support from the Ulster-Scots Agency facilitated the ongoing comprehensive condition checking and conservation of the Gibson Collection of Robert Burns, and the restoration of a number of Burns-related artworks which vividly illustrate the impact of Burns.

Building on the retention of our full museum accreditation status, under funding from the Art Fund administered by Northern Ireland Museums Council, to mark Earth Day we took part in The Wild Escape programme, with pupils from Forge Integrated Primary School visiting us to learn about wildlife with a National Trust Ranger and to undertake an Illustration workshop with a children's illustrator. Engaging with the next generation of users of the Library is always pleasing, and the Library was alive with noise and colour as the kids had a really memorable experience.

I end, as always, with gratitude to our members who support the collections through membership, and those who have contributed to the endowment fund which facilitates much-needed conservation, and to the hundreds who support us through donations to the collections, a list of whom is included at page 12.



Samantha McCombe

Governors

President: Dr P McGarry OBE, DL, FRCPsych

Vice-President: Prof M Ó Mainnín, BA, MA, PhD

Honorary Secretary: Dr S Bridge, MA, MSc, PhD

Honorary Treasurer: Mr C McClean

Governors: Mr G Dorrian
Mr S McKee, BA
Mr J McVey, OBE, MBA, MSc
Ms B Napier, LLB
Ms S Stevenson, ACR

Dr F Ferguson, BA, MA, PhD
Mr J Fitzsimons, MA(TCD), MSc(QUB)
Prof B Kelly, MA, MD, FRCS, FRCR, FFRCSI
Mr G Lucy, BA Hons, PGCE
Mr J McCartney, MSc

Staff

Management Team

Director Ms J Andrews, LLB (Hons)
Librarian Ms S McCombe, MA, MSc
Finance Manager Mrs K Law, BSSc (Hons) Accounting, FCA
Deputy Librarian Mrs M Cash, BA (Hons), PGDip (LIS)

Library Services

Senior Library Assistant Ms M Flynn, PGCert (ILS)
Library Assistants Mrs L Caskey, BSc (Hons), ACLIP, PGDip (LIM) (until December 2023)
Mr S Corr, MSc, PGDip (LIM)
Miss C Daly, BA (Hons), MA, PGDip (LIM)
Mr A Dunlop, BA (Hons), PGDip (LIM)
Ms J Hoben, PGDip (LIM)
Mrs L Ogryzko, BA (Hons), MA, MSc

Administrative Services

Head of Marketing, Digital & Communications Mrs A Kanakaki, BA (Hons), MA, MSc
Digital Content Creator Mr S Edgar, BSc (until September 2023)
Arts and Cultural Programmer Dr P Horton, MA, PhD (from April 2023)
Special Projects Co-Ordinator Dr M Baird, MA, PhD
Museum Engagement Assistant Mr J Danby, BSc (Hons), MPhil
Membership Administrator Mrs A Wallace
Facilities Officer Mr R Grainger
Charity Bookshop Manager Mr D Cash, BA (Hons)
Finance Assistant Mr B Sloan, MIATI
Operations and Visitor Experience Manager Ms B Hunter

Charity Bookshop	John Allen, Frank Baronwell, Noelle Cavana, Elizabeth Hilditch, Janine Lynch, Deirdre McAuley, Leslie McConnell, Evelyn Moles, Jacqueline O'Brien, James Orchin, Craig Richards, David Keane
Meet & Greet Volunteers	Rosemary Hope, Nigel Killops, Anne Lennon, Jim McCartney, Janice Medley, Maureen McFarland, Tabitha Minson, Lavinia Wilson, Gwen Tener, Jacqueline O'Brien, Sabine Troendle
Tours	John Bradbury, Gerry Devaney, Nigel Killops, Jim McCartney, Maria McGilly
Special Projects	Darren Colbourne
Reading Groups	John Bradbury, Stiofán Ó'Direáin
Collections	Joyce Campbell, Gerry Devaney, Mal Higgins, Maria McGilly, Janice Medley, Kathryn Wilson
Volunteer Coordinator	Jim McCartney

Honorary Members

The Linen Hall is an independent organisation, and memberships are vital for our survival and growth. By becoming a member of The Linen Hall, you are continuing a tradition dating back to 1788. More than that, your membership helps us protect and preserve our unique collections for future generations.

While supporting our work, you will enjoy all the exclusive benefits of being a member, such as borrowing from our extensive range of books, early bird access to all The Linen Hall events, and generous discounts on event bookings, The Linen Hall Gift Range and The Linen Hall Café.

If you ever need support with your membership, you can contact our Membership Administrator Mrs Amanda Wallace.

Our current Honorary Members are:

Mrs M J Campbell	Ms Catherine Anne Davies	Ms Polly Devlin, OBE
Dr Pat Donlon	Dr Barry Douglas	Dr Tom Hartley
Dr Jennifer Johnston	Dr Brian Keenan	Dr Michael Longley
Mr Neil Martin	Mr Tim McGarry	Sir George Ivan Morrison, OBE
Dr Sinéad Morrissey	Prof Glenn Patterson	Mr John Simms
Dr Brian M Walker		



2023 REPORT

Our Year's Review

During 2023, we hosted almost 80 events and numerous exhibitions covering a wide range of topics, spanning from history and politics to art, theatre, literature, and more. We fostered new writing and supported emerging writers and explored Northern Ireland's rich literary heritage. Many writers visited the library to talk about and read from their work, including Martin Doyle, Michelle Gallen, Wendy Erskine, Michael Magee, Dawn Watson, and Brian McGilloway, who generously donated his archive to the library.

In commemoration of the tenth anniversary of Seamus Heaney's passing, we organised several events, including a talk, a poetry reading featuring poets from the Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry at Queen's, and a screening of *Something to Write Home About*, in partnership with BBC Northern Ireland.

We were privileged to host Corinna MacNeice, daughter of poet Louis MacNeice, for a panel discussion with Edna and Michael Longley, introduced by Paul Muldoon.

The year 2023 marked the 40th anniversary of the play *Lay Up Your Ends* by Martin Lynch and Charabanc Theatre Company and was an opportunity to use our unique Theatre and Performing Arts Archive to celebrate Women in Theatre in Northern Ireland. A month-long exhibition from our archive was accompanied by a raft of events, organised in partnership with the drama departments at Ulster University and Queen's University. It was a particular honour to hold an event celebrating of the work and life of playwright Jo Egan, whose archive is part of our collections. We were also delighted to work with The Lyric to exhibit some wonderful costumes for women from their theatre productions.

Throughout 2023, we collaborated with various partners, including the Ulster-Scots



Agency, Belfast International Arts Festival, Their Finest Hour, Linen Biennale, and the Northern Ireland Science Festival. Our public talks covered diverse subjects, ranging from *Bad Bridget* to Robert McAdam, and included discussions on Thomas Russell, the Scottish Enlightenment, climate change, and the Dunlops road racing dynasty. We were thrilled to welcome Lady Mary Peters to the library to share insights into her sporting journey.

Special Projects

Our two special projects in 2023, 'Origins and Legacies: The Belfast/Good Friday Agreement' and 'Borders and Boundaries', explored important but contentious topics in Northern Ireland's history and contemporary society. Our priority was to consider the multiple attitudes and experiences that have shaped and been shaped by these issues. Using oral history testimonies, written submissions, and our extensive collections, we curated exhibitions and organised events series

which reflected on the Agreement, and the different borders and boundaries extant in Northern Ireland. The engagement from visitors, audiences, and participants with both projects was very rewarding, and we hope we will continue working with communities and other institutions to foster greater understanding of the past and the present.





Marketing

In 2023, The Linen Hall saw significant progress in marketing, building on the groundwork laid in 2022; with our branding effort and new marketing strategy we expanded our outreach like never before.

Our updated branding caught people's attention, and our social media presence saw substantial growth, as we achieved record engagement on social media platforms. At the beginning of 2023, we introduced ticketed events and a two-tiered pricing system for members and non-members. This new approach not only proved to be financially beneficial, increasing our revenue and enhancing our sustainability, but also encouraged more people to consider becoming members of The Linen Hall.

In response to a significant funding reduction from the Department for Communities in May 2023, we initiated an awareness campaign and encouraged our

members and supporters to participate in an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) survey, which received an outstanding response. Subsequently, a successful fundraising campaign ensued, with our dedicated members and friends contributing £14,550, although it fell short of fully covering our funding gap.

Continuing our tradition of strong media coverage, press support remained steadfast throughout the year, providing valuable opportunities to highlight our diverse range of activities. Looking ahead, we aim to capitalise on the successes of 2023 with new campaigns focused on revenue generation and showcasing our exceptional offering - from room rentals and events to tours, language classes, exhibitions, and our extensive collections, as we strive to reinforce our position as one of Northern Ireland's most significant cultural institutions.



Library Facilities

The Linen Hall's listed Victorian building in the heart of Belfast offers a range of function rooms for hire, including the atmospheric Governors' Room, an intimate, booklined meeting space; the well-equipped Performance Area, and the Northern Room/Members' Area with its privileged viewpoint overlooking Belfast City Hall and Donegall Square.

These rooms are available for all kinds of events: meetings, performances, talks, book launches, and conferences, to name but a few. The Linen Hall is also a sought after filming location, and some couples have chosen to have their wedding photographs taken against its unique interior backdrop, or to entertain their guests after the ceremony.

The Linen Hall's unique range of gifts, for lovers of all things literary and local, is always expanding and is popular with members and visitors alike. We have

expanded our range of locally produced jewellery, gifts, crafts, and linen.

We have also, from September, increased our offering from the Charity Bookshop and have some very interesting, rare books available for sale. Revenues are returning to strength post-pandemic, thanks to the support of members and local visitors, and the welcome return of tourists and cruise ships to Belfast. All income from gift shop sales helps to promote The Linen Hall's financial sustainability.





Charity Bookshop

The Linen Hall Charity Bookshop, now in its twelfth year, continued to thrive in 2023 at the Fountain Centre. However, in March 2023, we were obliged to vacate our premises on Fountain Street after five years.

We relocated to Linenhall Street, offering a scenic view of The Linen Hall's origins, but due to low footfall and distance from the main library, we had to relocate back into The Linen Hall. Now situated on level 2, we also operate online shops on eBay (The Linen Hall Charity Bookshop) and AbeBooks (Linen Hall Library) and can be found at St Georges Market most weekends.

While we continue to search for new premises, the Charity Bookshop remains a significant source of income supporting the library's charitable mission. We extend thanks to our loyal customers, benefactors, volunteers, and friends whose unflinching support has made the shop the success that it has been.

Charity Bookshop Donations

We are grateful to the following for their donations to the Charity Bookshop: Mr P Erskine, Ms M Zepf, and Mrs C McCafferty and to all the other kind donors of books. We unfortunately had to turn away a lot of very kind offers of donations this year due to the relocation and closure of the Charity Bookshop separate premises. We really appreciate you thinking of us and when we reopen The Charity Bookshop in separate premises, we will be very grateful for all donations again.



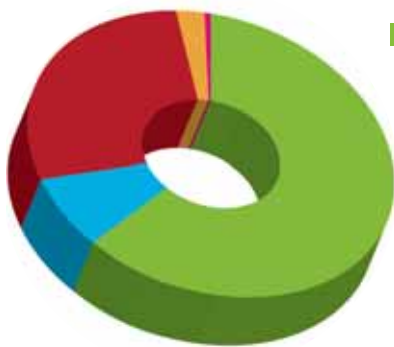
Facts & Figures



LOAN FIGURES 2023

■ General	4,862
■ Irish & Ref.	3,894

TOTAL COLLECTION QUERIES 4,120



■ Irish & Local Studies	2,555
■ Newspapers	315
■ NIPC	1,170
■ Theatre	75
■ Other	5

Cataloguing

The total number of items added to the catalogue in 2023 is 5,454.

COLLECTION DONATIONS

The Library would like to thank all donors to our collections:

ABC Family History Society; Barri Adair; Aeracha Uladh GAC; Dr Brigitte Anton; Christine Ashby; Mike Ashworth; James Bacon; Christine Baganis; Gail Barry; Andrew Beattie; Seán Beattie; Margaret Beirne; Sally Bell; Vera Blair; Elaine Bleakney; Valerie Boucher; Dr Sean Brady; Harry Brandsma; El Brennan; Dr Simon Bridge; British Council; Bright Umbrella Drama Co; Lucy Brisbane; Morah Brown-Davis; Prof Steve Bruce; John Byrne; Don Carleton; MF Carragher; Joan Carson; Laura Caskey; Michael Cassidy; the estate of the late Peter Cavan; Centre for Health and Wellbeing; Dr Andrew D Charles; Clive Cochrane; Margaret Copeland; Seán Corr; Rev Suzanne Cousins; Fiona Cox; Brian Crook; David Z Crookes; Ciaran Crossey; Grace Cuming; Monica Cummings; Eamon Cunningham; Jonathan Cunningham; John Cushnahan; John Cushnan; Joshua Danby; Kim Davidson; Anne Davies; Mary Delargy; Eleanor Dent; Ray Dilworth; Terence Donovan; Tony Donovan; PJ Dorrian; Martin Doyle; Anthony Drennan; Sara Duncan; Patricia Dunlop; Robina Ellis; Maura Erskine; Families Beyond Conflict; Gerry Finnegan; Neil Faris; Geraldine Fleming; Michael Fleming; Jane Fox; Cecilia Gilbert; Capt. Bernard Gilliland; Brian Gilmore; Chris Gilmour; John Gordon; Eileen Gorman; John Gray; Prof Peter Gray; Keith Haines; Michael Hall; James Hardy; Fiontánn Hargey; Michael S Harris; Dr Tom Hartley; Dermot Healy; Dr Shonagh Hill; Dr Sophia Hillan; Helena Holland; Howth Singing Circle; Catherine Hudson; Patrick Hughes; Belinda Hunter; Institute of Conflict Research; Integrated Education Fund; Irish News; Irish Pages; George James; Miranda Jemphney; Rosemary Jenkinson; Myrtle Johnston; David Keane; Roger Kelly; Kilbroney Parish Church; Reggie Killops; Irene Kingston; Dr John Kyle; Labour History Workshop; Dr Clare Lapraik Guest; Asha Marie Larson-Baldwin; Gerald Lavery; Una Lawther; Gilles Le Biez; Lecale and Downe Historical Society; Alastair Logan; Alice Look; Loretta Lough; Jane Lovel; Gordon Lucy; Lyric Theatre; C McCafferty; Chris McClean; J Graham McCluggage; Alf McCreary; Robert McDill; Elizabeth McDowall; Mary McFall; Maureen McFarland; DTW McFarlane; Dr Philip McGarry; Anne McGibbon; Brian McGilloway; Fr Thomas McGlynn; S McGouran; Clare McKay; H McKeown; Sir Richard McLaughlin; Alasdair MacLaughlin; Margaret McMahan; Dr Thomas McNeill; Prof Monica McWilliams; John Magee; Fergal Maguire; Manorhamilton and District Historical Society; Shaun Martin; D Melville; ACW Merrick; Carol Moore; Paul Moore; Luke Moreland; Ellen Morren; Dr JN Morton; Gerard Muldoon; Maeve Mulholland; Tommy Mulligan; David NK Murphy; Paul Murphy; National Collection of Northern Ireland Publications (NIPR); Valerie Norris; Brendan O’Friel; Una O’Hara; Dr KD O’Malley; Billy O’Neill; Irene Orr; OSNI Archive Department; Robin Parkes; Peter Peggall; Lady Mary Peters; Robert Pimley; Rev Jim Rea; Brian Redpath; Prof Niamh Reilly; Danielle Roberts; Paul Robinson; Fionnbharr Rodgers; Patricia Rogerson; Bill Rolston; Colum Sands; Cormac Scally; Larry Sheeran; Jeremy Shields; Mark Simpson; Social Change Initiative; South East Fermanagh Foundation; Denis Smyth; S Smyth; Ed Spence; Colin H Steele; Hugh Stevenson; Austin Stewart; Lucy Sweeney Byrne; Ruth Taillon; R Mark Temple; Chris Thackaberry; Alan Tongue; Madeleine Tongue; Carmel Uí Cheallaigh; Ulster-Scots Community Network; Union Theological College; Councillor Nicola Verner; Jonathan Vischer; Larry A Vogt; Lynda Walker; Dr Patrick Walsh; JB Watson; Geraldine Wilkins; Dr Fionnuala Carson Williams; Robert Williamson; Brian Willis; Helen Wilson; Elizabeth M Wiseman; WG Woods; Workers Party Northern Ireland; Ruth Yeo; Myra Zepf.

Financial Summary

Summaries of the Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st December 2023 and the Statement of Financial Position as at that date are set out on pages 14 and 15. Full financial statements have been published separately and are available on request from the Linen Hall or online at www.linenhall.com.

Overview

The Linen Hall faced severe funding challenges in 2023, suffering a cut of one third of its core funding from the Department for Communities which coincided with a period of rising costs, particularly the cost of energy to keep the building open to the public and irreplaceable archives in the conditions necessary for their conservation. Nevertheless, work continued on several funded projects which had begun in 2022, alongside successful applications for further projects, some carrying on into 2024, all of which served to enhance the Linen Hall's contribution to society and to support its financial sustainability. Notably in December 2023, National Lottery Heritage Fund awarded a grant of up to £245k to fund Linen Hall 2 – A Museum of Contemporary History in NI Scoping Study.

The Linen Hall's operating deficit, before actuarial movements on the pension scheme and net gains/losses on revaluation of investments, was £423k in 2023 (2022: £515k). Its overdraft balance grew to £236k at the end of 2023, from a credit balance of £20k on 31st December 2022. The Linen Hall normally operates within a bank overdraft facility of £150k to finance its day-to-day operations and aims to minimise reliance on this facility in the medium term.

The management team works hard to keep core operating costs as low as possible, but most goods and services were affected by price inflation in 2023, especially electricity and gas. Finance costs also increased due to interest charged on the bank overdraft.

In 2024, the Linen Hall will work to increase and diversify its income streams, investigating potential new core funders, reviewing its membership model, and continuing to identify new projects. Ongoing international partnerships will be strengthened. The fully funded feasibility study being undertaken regarding Linen Hall 2 is a further step towards improved resilience and sustainability.

Income

The Linen Hall's grant income from all sources was £441k in 2023, compared to £602k in 2022, with funding for special projects down by £73k and grants towards core operating costs down by £88k. Total income excluding pension scheme adjustments fell by 8% in 2023, and the proportion of income obtained from all types of grant funding fell from 58% to 47%.

Income from membership subscriptions and associated Gift Aid was £141k in 2023 (2022: £131k), and the Governors and staff remain grateful for the loyal support of the Linen Hall by its members; they will strive to keep the membership offer relevant and attractive in 2024 and beyond.

Commercial rental income rose from £102k in 2022 to £120k in 2023, as there had been a period of vacancy in 2022 in the smaller of the two shop units owned by the Linen Hall.

The Linen Hall Charity Bookshop lost its shop unit at the Fountain Centre in March 2023, the replacement premises proved unsatisfactory for footfall, and sales moved online and to St George's Market from September 2023; this resulted in a reduction in its annual sales from £48k to £26k. However, café income, gift shop sales, commercial use of the Linen Hall building for room hire and filming, box office and tour income all achieved better results than in 2022.

Income from donations and legacies increased from £56k in 2022 to £95k in 2023; all gifts and legacies are gratefully received, whether to general funds or to the Linen Hall Library Endowment Fund.

Expenditure

Core staff costs represented 45% of all the Linen Hall's costs in 2023, up marginally from 44% in 2022, and employment costs overall remain the largest single area of expenditure. Average staff numbers, on a full-time equivalent basis, remained at 19 in 2023, including additional project staff, and overall employment costs including pension scheme adjustments fell from £913k to £811k. A detailed breakdown of all expenditure is set out in notes 5 to 10 to the separately published financial statements.

Pension Scheme

The Linen Hall operates a defined benefit pension scheme through NILGOSC, and the Linen Hall's section of the scheme was in surplus by £1,562k on 31st December 2023, an improvement of £268k over the previous year's surplus position, although actuarial movements on the pension scheme are beyond the Linen Hall's control. Net operating charges and finance income/costs related to the pension scheme amounted to a return of £56k (2022: cost of £201k) and this is included in reported net operating costs. The Linen Hall's contribution rate to

the NILGOSC scheme remains at 18.7% of salary.

Grants

The following table sets out recent levels of support from each of the Linen Hall's top five funders in 2023.

FUNDER	2023	2022	2021	2020
	£k	£k	£k	£k
Dept. for Communities	213	309	291	355
National Lottery Heritage Fund	94	157	376	261
Belfast City Council	36	34	49	25
Ulster-Scots Agency	30	32	82	38
DoFA; Reconciliation Fund	28	34	38	0

Grants awarded for defined projects in pursuit of the Linen Hall's mission, from all sources, decreased from £294k in 2022 to £221k in 2023, and grants towards core operating costs fell by £88k. Full details of all grant income and the awarding bodies are set out in Note 2 to the separately published financial statements, and further information on the funded projects undertaken in 2023 can be found at note 23.

Donations

We are grateful to all those who made donations to the Linen Hall in 2023; your generosity and support are essential in sustaining its charitable mission and unique contribution to society.

Karen Law, Finance Manager

Statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 December 2023

	Endowment Funds	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2023	Total Funds 2022
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Income and endowments from					
Donations and legacies	2	454	221	677	789
Rental income	-	120	-	120	102
Income from investments	-	73	2	75	9
Income from charitable activities					
Other trading activities	-	135	-	135	128
Total income	2	782	223	1,007	1,028
Expenditure on					
Rental expenses	-	2	-	2	2
Raising funds	-	68	-	68	59
	-	70	-	70	61
Expenditure on charitable activities					
Projects and events	-	-	318	318	322
Library operating costs	-	1,042	-	1,042	1,160
	-	1,042	318	1,360	1,482
Total expenditure	-	1,112	318	1,430	1,543
Net (expenditure)/income	2	(330)	(95)	(423)	(515)
Transfers between funds	-	(3)	3	-	-
Net (expenditure)/income before recognised gains and losses	2	(333)	(92)	(423)	(515)
Net gains/(losses) on investments	14	-	-	14	(37)
Actuarial gains on defined benefit pension scheme	-	212	-	212	1,818
Net movement in funds	16	(121)	(92)	(197)	1,266
Fund balance brought forward	359	7,907	367	8,633	7,367
Total funds carried forward	375	7,786	275	8,436	8,633

Statement of financial position as at 31 December 2023

	2023	2022
	£'000	£'000
Fixed assets		
Tangible assets	4,107	4,252
Heritage assets	2,760	2,760
Investments	312	263
	7,179	7,275
Current assets		
Stocks	15	16
Debtors	62	114
Cash at bank and in hand	63	82
	140	212
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(445)	(148)
Net current (liabilities)/assets	(305)	64
Creditors: amounts falling due after one year	-	-
Net assets excluding pension asset	6,874	7,339
Pension asset	1,562	1,294
Net assets including pension asset	8,436	8,633

Funds		
Unrestricted funds:		
- General fund	750	871
- Revaluation fund	7,036	7,036
	7,786	7,907
Restricted funds	275	367
Endowment funds	375	359
Total funds	8,436	8,633

CORPORATE MEMBERS

The Linen Hall is most grateful to the following organisations for their continued support throughout the year:

Antrim & Newtownabbey
Borough Council

Bar Library

Barnett, W & R Ltd

BBC Trust NI

Belfast Natural History and
Philosophical Society

Belfast Royal Academy

Belfast Visitor & Convention Bureau

Building Automation Controls Ltd

Colourpoint Creative Limited

County Grand Orange Lodge of Belfast

Davison Lamont Limited

Gallagher Insurance Brokers Ltd

Historic Environment Division, DfC

International Futures Forum

Irish Association for Cultural,
Economic & Social Relations

Irish News

Macmillan Media

Masonic Lodge of Research

McConnell Chartered Surveyors Ltd

National Union of Journalists Belfast
and District Branch

NIPSA

Northern Ireland Assembly Library

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Northern Ireland Public Services
Ombudsman

Ormeau Business Park

Police Ombudsman's Office Library

Public Record Office of NI

Tandem Design

Ulster Historical Foundation

Ulster-Scots Agency

Unison

Unite The Union

DALARADIA



ORR



P.M.M.

RESERVE



AP



CULTURE



ER



heritage

*"Piped in red mantles and with caps of red
... had they, now have they spears on shield
... to merron his bow a bagpipe held"*

THE LINEN HALL

BELFAST 1788

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The Linen Hall is registered with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC 104 564

