

The Bawn



Chairman's Comments

As Chair of the White House Preservation Trust I am delighted to welcome you to this first production of 'The Bawn' by the Trust.

It has been a long and difficult journey in securing funding for restoration of The White House but, thanks to the determination of the Trustees, we can now look forward to work starting in late May. As can be seen visiting the White House requires wearing a hard hat, I look forward to welcoming you to the restored building in 2009 when protective headwear is no longer necessary and we can all 'relive the history'.

Billy Webb

Chairman



Chairman Billy Webb

Welcome

In this first issue we would like to introduce you to the Trustees of The White House Preservation Trust, so you can find out those behind this exciting project. The White House Preservation Trust is a company limited by guarantee set up in 2000 to preserve the White House, A photograph of the Trustees with the Minister for the Environment can be seen on the back page.

William Webb - Chairman
Victoria Dundas – Vice Chairman
Alister Bell – Secretary
JJ Tohill – Treasurer
Fred Dundee
Roy McComb
The Lord O'Neill
John Sherlock
Ellen Wilson

The Trust has recently appointed two new Trustees:
Frazer Agnew
Doreen Corcorran

The White House through the years



By Permission of the Trustees of National Museums Northern Ireland



Present day development



A Brief History

The White House stands on the foreshore of Belfast Lough and is recognised by historians and archaeologists as one of the finest examples of a plantation bawn (a stone fortified dwelling) still in existence in Ireland. It is older than any building in Belfast by 150 years. McHugh's bar the oldest building dates back to 1710.

The White House gets its name because of the limestone render which can still be seen on some of its walls. The Village of Whitehouse was named after the building and it was used as a navigational point on Belfast Lough. It also acted as a communication point from Carrickfergus to Belfast linking in with Castle Lugg, Greencastle and Belfast Castle.



The White House is first shown on a map of 1569 "Cragfergus Baie" the original name for Belfast Lough. The Preservation trust has been unable to trace this map, but an article in the Belfast Telegraph dated 24th March 1949 by Colin Johnston Robb records the map as being amongst the contents of Mulroy House, Carrigart, Co. Donegal, the seat of Lord Leitrim. It was subscribed "Christopher Saxton after Michael Fitzwilliams, 1569" Robb, who saw the original map, gives an account of what is seen on the map and states "The small castles of Greencastle and Whitehouse are indicted along the shore line and the Castle of Carrickfergus". The Trust is currently trying to trace this map.



Christopher Sexton is described in the records as "servant to Thomas Seckford". Seckford was Master of the Requests to Queen Elizabeth. By a license dated July 22, 1577 he was appointed official surveyor to draw maps of England and Wales. In 1577 he must have been considered the first cartographer in the land. Michael Fitzwilliams was Surveyor General of Lands, Plantations and Mines on the Irish Establishment from 1552 to 1573.

The earliest written evidence of the White House is A "Noate" written in 1574 which states that 'several gentleman adventurerers in the forces of Queen Elizabeth I were given several seats as their princypall dwellings, which included two little pyles beneath the caves four miles from Cragfergus' The two pyles

referred to were The Greencastle and The White House the later was given to a Mr Brunker and the former to a Mr Barkley. Brunker had seen hard active service under Earl Essex and Perot during the Spanish wars.

It is recorded by the Rev A F Scott-Pearson that around 1641 George Martin the great - great - grandfather of the 1798 patriot Henry Joy McCracken, lived at The White House as Belfast's first non-conformist Sovereign. However, it is recorded that because he would not give accommodation to the troops of Oliver Cromwell the house was confiscated and he was lucky to escape to Scotland.

A Brief History

It was included in the vast territory granted to Sir Arthur Chichester at the turn of the 17th century. By the middle of this period ownership, or tenancy, had passed through the hands of several dignitaries including Thomas Boyd a merchant in 1636 and also a friend of Captain Blood, who may have given him shelter after his attempt to steal the crown Jewels, Captain Ellis and, by 1666, Hercules Davies, who is recorded as having paid Hearth Roll taxes on four fireplaces – these can still be identified today as part of the building's structure.

In the Ordnance Survey of 1839 it was in a bad state of depreciation, and was being used as a stable and barn by the owners of nearby Conningsby House. Conningsby House is the large house opposite the White House. Contained within the back yard of Conningsby House is a well (photograph opposite) which would have been used by the occupiers of the White House. As Conningsby was William III's Paymaster General it was named after him.

The White House lay virtually untouched as a deteriorating "shell" until it came under the ownership of Mr William Henry McLaughlin who lived at Macedon. McLaughlin's father founded the building firm of McLaughlin and Harvey and William Henry was the Chairman of the company. William Henry died at Macedon 18th July 1920 and, in the third codicil of his will, left The Old Whitehouse to Messers R.D. Gordon and Alexander Hamilton which, according to the document 'is at present used as a Mission Hall for the purpose of carrying on Gospel Evangelistic Work'. The document is dated 2nd day of April 1920. Whilst used as the Gospel Hall the owners consolidated the existing fabric and re-roofed the old building and used it as the Whitehouse Gospel Hall until 1996 when they moved to new premises. They only used part of the building whilst most of the right hand side of the building was left in ruin. Only one of the three flankers was in use.

Through the intervention of Bob Armstrong, and with the influence of Billy Webb the building was bought by Ulster Garden Villages on behalf of Abbey Historical Society in 1996. It was used by Abbey

Historical Society as a mini museum and HQ. Over the years the Society built up a large collection of artifacts and photographs and these will contribute to the temporary exhibitions in the refurbished White House. The White House Preservation Trust was incorporated in 2000 with the remit of acquiring funding towards restoration of the White House and it will be used as a cross-community Education and Information Centre.

King William III

An important episode in the history of this old prestigious building occurred on 14th June 1690 when the King's army consisting of 700 sailing ships disembarked 35,000 men at the ancient quay adjacent to The White House. The King met with his leading military officers to plan strategies before marching south, to confront James II in the Battle of the Boyne, on the 1st July of that year. It is also where Gideon Bonnivert, a scribe of King William, landed. His diary, recording this, is in the British Museum in London. It notes details of their landing and the greeting the soldiers got from the local people. It also describes the journey south to the Battle of the Boyne.

Much of this research was carried out by Robert Armstrong author of 'Newtownabbey Through the Ages', with additions by the current Secretary of the White House Trust Alister Bell.

Footnote: When the White House is restored it is hoped that many of the documents mentioned will have been traced and copied for exhibition.



So what will the new White House contain and how will we restore it:

Before building work can commence on site there has to be an archaeological dig, the dig is anticipated to start the last week in April. During this first week of excavation, the archaeology firm ADS will be digging test pits in order to assess how deep the excavation will go and what types of finds are likely to be found. The White House Preservation Trust, view this first week of excavation as an opportune time to introduce teachers to the site, ahead of class visits.

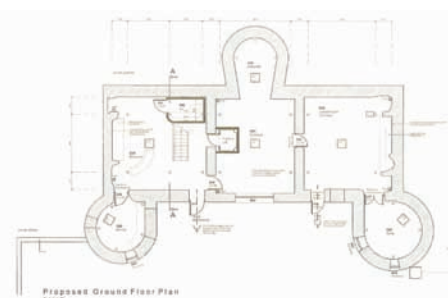
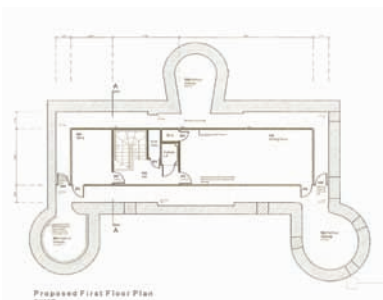
In order to facilitate visits on site, a viewing platform will be installed within the White House, which will allow visitors to observe the archaeologists at work. During school visits, an archaeologist will be on hand to introduce students to the different types of archaeology, to host a tour of the on-site excavation and will answer all the student's questions.

The students will then take part in a simulated dig, during which they will search for mystery objects. During this session they will come to realise the importance of documentation, written and visual, during a dig. While undertaking the simulated dig, the students will record individual objects and also the relationship between groups of objects found in close proximity to each other, known as 'finds'. The simulated dig will be very interactive. It will engage the children, encouraging them to make calculated inferences about the people who may have used these mystery objects and how they may have lived. The Education Officer has been busy developing a teacher's support pack to be used in conjunction with a visit to the dig. This pack will compliment curriculum based learning in the class room, as well as maximising on learning during a visit to the excavation. This pack provides information and activities on the processes archaeologists use when excavating, the role of science in archaeology, the history of the White House and the development of surrounding areas using historical texts, maps and photographs.

The archaeological excavation of the site is anticipated to run throughout the months of May and June during which we hope to host many school visits. The overall restoration of The White House should be seen as a story which will be unfolding over several months. Therefore, our website will be updated weekly so all schools that have visited the site can keep up to speed with the project and new 'find's' excavated along the way.

In March the newly appointed Education Officer launched the Trusts poster competition to schools, the posters will be used to advertise the public tours of the dig at the White House. Details of the competition were sent to all schools in Newtownabbey, Carrickfergus, Larne and North Belfast. The age categories are Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Each Key Stage will have one winner and each winner will choose from a selection of prizes. Also, there will be four prizes of £100 awarded to each individual winner's school.

Page one contains an illustration of what the building will look like when it is restored. After the archeological dig, which is the first work to be carried out, the walls will be secured and then a steel frame will be inserted inside the walls to create a new building. At ground floor level the modern brick work will be removed and the stone walls will be uncovered. A new upper floor will be created and this will be set back from the walls to allow visitors to go out onto a balcony and get a better view of the walls. The front will be of glass and the sides will be wood paneled.



The ground floor of the White House will be the main exhibition area of the building, Entrance will be via the current door to a reception area where there will be an exhibition on the building and the Whitehouse area itself. The walls will be taken back to their natural stonework and, through glass floor panels, the original floor level will be on view. There will be a platform lift from here to the second floor. Toilet facilities will also be available here. This will be the main information point. Within the turret will be a kitchen area.

The current main room will be an exhibition on the Williamite Wars, told from a European perspective, and will include details of the Siege of Derry, Schomberg's landing at Donaghadee, William's arrival at Carrickfergus, the Battle of the Boyne, the Battle at Agherim and an overview of the Siege of Limerick. The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue to wet the appetite for more information. The back turret will contain an audio visual presentation.

The current ruinous area will have an audio visual room and this will be used to tell the story via visuals; this will also be used to accommodate small lectures. Features within this area, such as the bread oven and fire place, will be brought to the fore. The remaining turret will be used as an artifact store.

The upper floor will be the main meeting/lecture room and will be the home for a number of new and existing groups; it will act as an Education Room and will be available to hire by outside groups. If your group is interested please contact the Secretary. There will also be an office for the Education Officer, Genealogy office and a library. The main room will also be used for the various temporary exhibitions that will take place.

As has been said there will be an exhibition on the history of the Whitehouse area contained in the restored building. Anyone having any unusual memories or photographs of the White House area which can be shared please contact the Trust Secretary ...contact details are at the back of the newsletter.



The White House Preservation Trust has recently launched a new logo designed by their exhibition consultant Mrs Smyth. The logo is based on heraldry and contains towers to portray a castle, the three ancient sails, which also form a W for White House, and the two crests portray the connection with the sea. The colour blue signifies the connection with the sea, and gold signifies the association with kingship.



Meet the Team

The Trust appointed a sub-group to take forward the restoration and this is made up of the Chair Billy Webb, the Secretary Alister Bell and professional staff:

Raymond McIlrath is Project Co-ordinator and has responsibility for the project management of the restoration. Raymond has also been responsible for dealing with the contract process for the building, directing the team of professionals and control of the cashflow and drawdown of grants. Raymond retired from a senior position in Northern Bank after 37 years and now runs his own business RMI Business Solutions and he is also a director in a property company.

Maria Cagney our new Education Officer is originally from Co. Limerick but has lived in Belfast for approximately 4 years.

In 2002, Maria completed a degree in Fine Art (Sculpture) at Limerick School of Art and Design after which she worked with Limerick Civic Trust as a researcher of local architectural heritage. Maria returned to university in 2004, attending the University of Ulster, Belfast campus. Here she completed a Masters in Irish Visual Culture. Since completing her study, Maria has worked with a variety of organisations including Newtownabbey Borough Council (Sentry Hill), Millennium Court Arts Centre (Portadown), Meath Arts Service and in a voluntary capacity with Open Art, who are an arts and disability organisation. Maria will be responsible for co-ordinating schools trips, public visits, developing education materials, education of the local community and arranging events to heighten awareness of the Trust.



50 Years of Progress

In 2008 Newtownabbey celebrates 50 years since its inception on the 1st April 1958. The Council has adopted the motto '50 Years of Progress' and it certainly will be for both the Trust and Newtownabbey Borough Council. By the end of the year the Trust will have progressed well with the restoration of the White House; this can be seen in the timetable below. Newtownabbey Borough Council will have progressed well with the final phase of the redevelopment of Mossley Mill as a conference and cultural centre. It is also fitting to make note on the original council coat of arms depicted below (from a plaque presented to Stella Maris Primary School at its opening and now in the possession of Abbey Historical Society) that the two towers in the centre represent the White House and Dunaney on Carnmoney Hill and in the new White House logo we have incorporated the castle.



It is also fitting to make note on the original council coat of arms depicted below (from a plaque presented to Stella Maris Primary School at its opening and now in the possession of Abbey Historical Society) that the two towers in the centre represent the White House and Dunaney on Carnmoney Hill and in the new White House logo we have incorporated the castle.

Archaeological Survey: May - June 08

Community Education Project:
April - September 08

Restoration Works: July 2008 - Feb 2009

Fit out and Display: February - April 2009

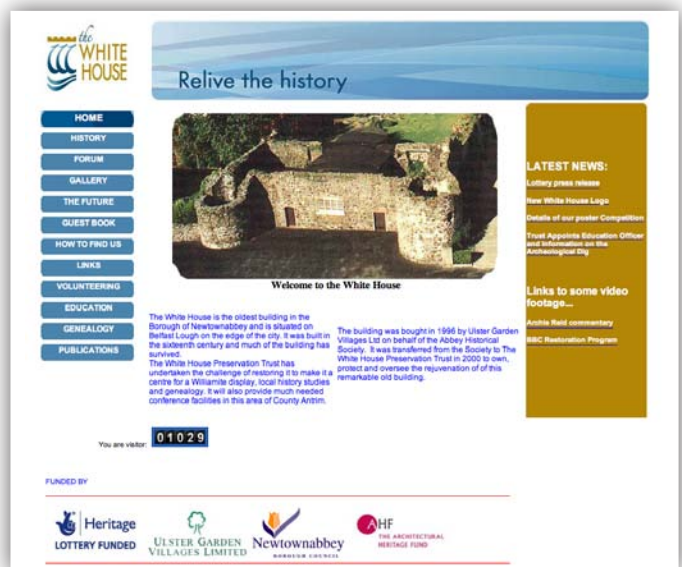
Opening: May 2009

Our Website

The White House Preservation Trust has recently relaunched their web site: www.thewhitehouseni.com

During the Archaeological dig there will be weekly blogs on any finds, progress of the project, photographs etc.

You will also be able to sign up and receive this newsletter by email, Volunteers Opportunities will also be advertised as will the public dig sessions and other events the Trust will be holding.



Professional Team

Project Management: RMI Business Solutions

Contractors: Hugh J O'Boyle – Downpatrick

Architects: Consarc Design Group

Exhibition consultants: Mrs Smyth

Archaeologists;

Archaeological Development Services (ADS)

Quiz Time

As this is the first issue of the Bawn under the White House Preservation Trust why not take part in our first quiz. Please send the answers on a postcard to the Secretary at the address shown on the back by 31st May 2008 including your name and contact details. The winner will receive a Golf Umbrella.

1. What is the date of the first known map showing The White House?
2. Which monarch granted the White House as a Reward?
3. What was the name of the person so rewarded?
4. How many fireplaces were Heath Roll Taxes paid on?
5. What was the name of the house which used the White House as a stable?
6. Who made a legacy of the White House as a Gospel Hall?
7. What building firm was this person associated with?
8. Who bought the Gospel Hall for Abbey Historical Society?

Coordinator of a steering group and several public meetings were held in the school under the name of the Coole History Group, the name of which was changed at their inaugural annual general meeting to 'Abbey Historical Society'.



The Society now meets in Newtownabbey Community High School the second Monday of each month and has a variety of speakers. Meetings start at 7.30pm sharp and admission is £1 for members £2 for non-members.

The May meeting on the 12th May will be the David Luke Memorial Lecture, and Annual General Meeting, when the speaker will be Trust Treasurer JJ Tohill who will be showing video material from his large collection.

Abbey Historical Society

The photographs are taken at some of the societies meetings and trips. The formation of a historical society in the area was first discussed at a meeting of the Board of Governors of Monkstown Community School in 1993.



The proposal was made by their Chairman Shaun Henry and had the unanimous support of the other Governors and the Principal Mr Raymond King. Derek Smyth a most knowledgeable and enthusiastic history teacher, was appointed Secretary and Co-



Abbey Historical Society also has a weekly history group which meets at 8pm each Wednesday night and, during the summer months, undertakes a number of Walks and Talks: for further details contact Vikki Dundas the Chairman of the Society on 9087 9872.

Important Visitors to the White House

The Trust was pleased to welcome the Mayor, Alderman Nigel Hamilton, and the Minister of the Environment Arlene Foster MLA in August 2007. The Minister made the first entry in the new guest book and said "Looking forward to the return visit".



The Minister was presented with a book which contained a painting and history of the White House by Bob Armstrong and Jon Marshall.



Trustees Fred Dundee, Ellen Wilson, John Sherlock, Roy McComb, Alister Bell, Billy Webb, The Minister, Vikki Dundas, Raymond McIlrath, JJ Tohill.

Contact Details

Billy Webb - Chairman
Tel: 028 9096 7167 Email: wj.webb@ntlworld.com

Alister Bell - Secretary
Tel: 07745409509
Email: secretary@thewhitehouseni.com

Maria Cagney - Education Officer
Tel: 07500237292
Email: education@thewhitehouseni.com

Raymond McIlrath - Project Organiser
Email: projectorganiser@thewhitehouseni.com

Temporary address:
14 Whitehouse Park, Newtownabbey, BT37 9SQ
Tel: 028 9080 1690

Volunteers Required

Have you some hours to spare each week? Are you interested in becoming involved in an exciting project? Do you want to be part of a social team? Just look at the photographs of Volunteers having FUN!!! Why not volunteer with the White House Preservation Trust. Help is required with the schools visits, administration, cleaning etc during the Restoration of Newtownabbey's oldest building.



For further details contact the email below or complete the on line form on the web site or write to our temporary address.

Volunteers@thewhitehouseni.com