

## FOR INFORMATION

The following body is not under the control of the General Assembly. The Report is included for information only.

### PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IRELAND

*The Very Rev Dr John Lockington writes:*

The Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland reports that 2016 has been another busy year when we have built upon some of the achievements outlined in last year's report.

It has however been a challenging year dominated by some important issues not all of which are as yet capable of resolution.

1. We have had to alter quite fundamentally how we present our accounts and fulfil various other regulations in order to bring us into line with the requirements of the Charity Commissioners. All of this was notified to us well in advance, and helpful guidance was readily available. We for our part have tried to follow the regulations with meticulous care, and we believe that we have achieved the requirements of a responsible charity. During the year we took out indemnity insurance to cover our obligations as a Charity Trustees

2. Throughout much of the year, we have lived with uncertainty over the question of our future accommodation. Last year we pled our case for additional money to enable us to take over the whole of 26 College Green, and we were delighted when this was granted.

However, as a result of a decision of the General Assembly in June, the society has been invited to occupy a prestigious site in Assembly Buildings. At a Special Meeting of Council on 13 May, 2016 we welcomed the invitation, but outlined a number of concerns. At the time of writing, we await written assurances on these and other issues we have raised.

3. Whatever the final outcome may be, we will still need financial assistance to begin the conversion of either premises to meet our needs

4. As well as an excellent programme of lectures, we have continued to incorporate some less formal events. These included a notable symposium on the First World War to mark the centenary of the Battle of the Somme; co-operation with the Presbyterian Children's Society and its 150th anniversary; a summer visit to Magee Campus and a Field Trip to Newtownabbey and South Antrim.

5. During the year, in addition to the Bulletin we had the official launch in March 2016 by the Moderator of Dr WP Addley's book, Jack Weir, in addition to producing three other publications, Putting Children First (Jointly with the Children's Society), The Rentoul Dynasty by Dr John Lockington, and Dr Joe Thompson's book, Jonathan Simpson.

Our publication Committee has recently produced a study paper about future policy and how to market our productions.

6. Over the last 5 years the Society has benefited enormously from funding from MAGUS (the Ministerial Advisory Group on the Ulster Scots Academy) but unfortunately this funding stream has now ended. We are, however, exploring other sources of funding.

7. The Commercial Use of Assembly Buildings Task Group is working on the development in the reception area of Assembly Buildings of an exhibition

about PCI, its work and witness as well as a history of the denomination. The Society has been working closely with the Task Group on the historical element of the exhibition, particularly on the selection of suitable material for display.

8. The Society is very grateful to individuals, congregations and others who entrust historical material to the care of the Society. This year has seen the completion of the transfer to the Society's premises in 26 College Green of all the Synod and Presbytery minutes that were stored in the Assembly Buildings strong room. Not only are they being housed in dry conditions but they have all been cleaned, boxed in archival boxes and catalogued. A growing number of congregational records are also being entrusted to our care.

9. The Society continues to share information with other organisations, agencies and blogs which will help us raise our profile, and publicise our publications.

10. In April, the Council of the Society attended a very successful Away Day in 1st Holywood Presbyterian Church, facilitated by Mr Edgar Jardine, to discuss the future direction of the Society. As a result a draft Action Plan has been produced which will be monitored regularly though the outcomes will to some extent depend on funding, on the future location of the Society's library and archive and on the continuing support of congregations to publicise the Society.

11. As with any organisation corporate governance is important if the Society is to be responsible and effective so it behoves us to re-examine our Constitution from time to time. With this in mind the Society's Council has been reviewing the existing Constitution to ensure that it remains relevant and up-to-date. A revised version will be proposed for adoption at the 2017 AGM in March.

12. During 2016 there were 22,139 visits to the Society's website, an increase of over 11% from the previous year. New features are continually being added to the website e.g. on our History page a number of new articles on people, places and subjects of Presbyterian interest have been produced. The History of Presbyterian Congregations is not only being constantly updated but is being added to with the addition of available congregational histories. In addition we have begun to list what records have survived for each congregation. In order to publicise events, publications and lectures we make full use of Facebook.

13. The Society is most grateful to all those who do voluntary work on its behalf, those who deliver lectures and write booklets, articles and reviews, and most of all to our Librarian and Archivist, Valerie Adams, whose work on our behalf is quite outstanding.

14. Once again we would appeal for new members, and ask all our members to attend lectures and events, buy our publications, and try to introduce others to our Society. A number of Presbyteries have appointed Historical Agents, while others are in the process of doing so. We hope this will improve the local promotion of events and publications. We continue to be grateful to the few congregations who directly support our work. Our aim is to continue to serve the Church in every way we can.

**FOR INFORMATION**

The following funds are not under the control of the General Assembly and the Reports are included for information only.

**OLD AGE FUND, WOMEN'S FUND AND INDIGENT LADIES' FUND**

*The Rev W P H Erskine reports:*

1. The Directors report that, during the last financial year which ended 31st December 2016, 95 beneficiaries (42 in the Old Age Fund, 32 in the Women's Fund and 21 in the Indigent Ladies' Fund) received grants.

2. The changes in beneficiaries during the year is as follows:

Beneficiaries Receiving Quarterly Grant	Old Age Fund	Presbyterian Women's Fund	Indigent Ladies Fund	TOTAL
At 1 January 2015	38	28	17	83
New Grants Provided	3	3	2	8
Deaths	(2)	–	–	(2)
Grants no longer required	(1)	(3)	–	(4)
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As at 31 December 2015	38	28	19	85
Beneficiaries receiving one-off donations	1	1	2	4
Deaths and Grants no longer required (as above)	3	3	–	6
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No of Beneficiaries receiving assistance during the year	42	32	21	95

3. The total distribution of the Funds in Grants, Donations and Gifts was £153,100 (£67,025 from the Old Age Fund, £50,640 from the Women's Fund and £35,435 from the Indigent Ladies' Fund).

4. An annual grant of £1,440, paid quarterly, was sent to beneficiaries during the year (2015: £1,440).

5. A 'Special Gift' of £360 (2015: £360) was sent to every beneficiary prior to Christmas.

6. During the year the Directors responded sympathetically to various problems which had been brought to their attention. They gave one-off donations, as needed, to assist in particular cases where immediate financial aid was more appropriate than annual grants. Ministers are asked to bear in mind the possibility of help from these funds in similar cases connected with their own congregations.

7. The Directors assure the Church that all monies that come to the Funds are carefully and wisely spent.

8. The Directors of the Funds deeply appreciate the kindness and thoughtfulness of those who have remembered the work of the Funds either by gift or bequest, and hope that their example may encourage others to support this vital aspect of the Church's outreach.

9. The Directors of the Funds wish to thank the Staff for the sensitive and sympathetic way in which they carried out the efficient administration of the Funds during the year.

10. The Directors wish to record their deep appreciation for the committed service and valuable contribution of Mr Robert Kerr who died on 25 December 2016. Mr Kerr had served as a Director of the Funds from 24 March 1981 and was President of the Funds from 16 March 2005 to 23 March 2011.