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Saintfield News

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Mural Transforms Grey Wall To Vivid Scenes Of Village



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A long grey wall in Saintfield Community Centre has been given a new look with the addition of a very colourful new mural.

Thanks to a grant from Choice Housing, Saintfield Community Association commissioned local artist Kerrie McNeill to paint something bright and cheerful. Kerrie has chosen scenes from around Saintfield and portrayed them in very attractive primary colours on fourteen panels, each eight feet long and four feet high.

Choice Housing's Good Relations Officer Mark Kent said, "Following the success of our 5-year action plan in Saintfield and the work carried out by lots of community volunteers, we wanted to finish with a legacy, an arts feature that everyone can enjoy for many years to come. The mural will be something we all can be proud of and shows Saintfield as an inclusive and diverse area. We wish all the local community groups in Saintfield every success going forward."

The mural stretches for 112 feet along the passageway, which is the access to the community garden and will be the main pedestrian entrance to the new park being developed in the windmill field. The mural offers another good reason to come and explore what is available on the community centre site.

See more mural photographs and video at : <https://discoversaintfield.com/latest/>



Kerrie in her studio with assistant Cassidy



Saintfield Men's Shed very kindly put the panels up at no cost for their time

Chair's Viewpoint



Martyn Todd
Chair of Saintfield
Community
Association

"It is time for a fresh set of ideas and contacts to take over."

"I know that other people will come forward when they are needed to keep Saintfield moving ahead."

I first wrote a Chair's Viewpoint in the second edition of Saintfield News, back in the autumn of 2013. I took over from the late Gerry Lowe, who, with the late Sam Kerr, started so many projects for the benefit of Saintfield. Since then there have been three other chairs of the Association - Barbara Graham, Brian Gamble and Ian Murray, all of whom added significantly to the Association. There have been a few Vice-Chairs who had hoped to take on the role of Chair, but personal circumstance of one sort or another prevented this.

I have decided that this will be my last Chair's Viewpoint as I am standing down at the next SCA AGM. It is time for a fresh set of ideas and contacts to take over. Since 2013, the SCA team has made huge strides to improve Saintfield's resources and facilities. Anne Walker, followed by Lawrence Murphy, started the Greens Team, now called the SCA Environment Team. This group of volunteers has transformed the appearance of Saintfield - there are new displays of plants and flowers in many new places, from trees to shrubs to flowers, at the entrances to Saintfield and in locations on the Main Street and Memorial Garden to name only a few. This transformation has been hugely appreciated by residents and recognised by five awards from Ulster in Bloom in recent years. Saintfield's traders, churches and residents have contributed financially towards these improvements, sometimes in spite of difficult trading circumstances. Lawrence, with the help of Oonah Stringer and now Jackie Morgan, has also been the driver for the community garden, another shared resource for local people.

Barbara Graham led the work to get the community centre for Saintfield and had a major input to persuading the Council to provide what we now have. Without Barbara's expertise and persistence I don't believe we would have a community centre in Saintfield, let alone such an excellent one. The fact that the usage of these shared indoor facilities keeps growing shows how good Barbara's

ideas were. Barbara also had a major input into the project to acquire and develop the Windmill Field as a community heritage park. Saintfield owes her a lot. We also owe a lot to David Moffett, whose generous donations have made the Windmill Field project possible. And David would not have felt so positive towards the home of his ancestors if he had not seen the discoversaintfield website maintained by Ian Mack and the editions of this newsletter on the website, so well edited by Brian Gamble for ten years and now by Linda Stewart. Ian does the desk top publishing for Saintfield News and Vivien Lovell and her team deliver it to your doors.

When Newry, Mourne and Down District Council finally agreed to provide the community centre, it was on the condition that the community managed and ran it. Saintfield Community Trust, led by Damian Scarlett, took on this difficult challenge to start with and then, after Covid and the merger of Saintfield Community Trust with Saintfield Development Association to form Saintfield Community Association, Paul McGeown, David McMinn, David Greer and Graham Erskine have managed the community centre very successfully, resulting in the finances strengthening to the extent that part-time staff, led by the Centre Coordinator, Kristine Doyle, are providing excellent customer service to all the centre's users.

Saintfield would not be Saintfield without its Christmas Fair. This major event, part funded by Saintfield's traders, and other events for the benefit of local people, have been organised by the Events Team, now called the SCA Community Team. The leaders for these have been Ian Mack, then Bob Pollock, then David Greer and now Emma Duncan. These events are harder to organise each year as more and more bureaucracy has to be complied with. In spite of these administration challenges, cycling events, pub quizzes, community open days, historical talks and concerts have been organised and funded, all by volunteers. Brendan Burns and Emma are taking the lead in the new and very successful Saintfield Youth

Club, which is a very important addition to SCA's activities.

Other improvements to Saintfield and for residents include new Christmas illuminations on the Main Street, regular litter picks, upgrading The Square, lobbying for the overhead cables to be buried, producing a heritage development plan and a landscape master plan for the area, a facelift for the buildings on Fair Green, a footpath along Station Road to Windmill Road, delivering food parcels during the first Covid lock down and starting a Dolly Parton Imagination Library. Current and past board and committee members made all this happen, including John Branch, Lily Henderson, Muriel Massey, Pamela Dooley, Hannah Taggart, Jen Edwards, Oonah Stringer, Peter Gregg, Vivien Lovell and many, many others.

I could not finish this article without giving special mention to Lawrence Murphy. It is hard to accept that, in spite of his youthful appearance, Lawrence has been contributing to the local community in many different ways since 1974. It is fitting that his fifty years of giving to Saintfield has been recognised by many personal awards, including his British Empire Medal, as well as the five Ulster in Bloom awards for the SCA Environment Team which he leads.

Looking toward the future, I know that other people will come forward when they are needed to keep Saintfield moving ahead. It is a very special place and we must appreciate the benefits that so many hours of volunteer effort have brought us and, I'm sure, will continue to bring for our children and grand children.



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First Year Of Youth Club Has Been A Huge Success

The end of June brought our youth club to a close for the summer - and what a first year it has been. Since starting in September we have had more than 120 members registered, with an average of more than 40 young people at both Junior and Senior sessions.

Aside from our staple activities in the Main Hall, sensory room and ever-popular 3G pitch we have had a mindfulness coach visit regularly, as well as a NERF party, along with the odd karaoke session. My musical library has fairly expanded since the club began, although it does include a lot of Taylor Swift and Olivia Rodrigo!

This summer has brought a collaboration between Active Youth NI and the youth club, with the club paying for them to provide two week-long summer schemes, one in July and one in August at a discounted rate, thanks to the fantastic support of the youth club by the community.

Our aim is to open again in September and we are tweaking some minor aspects of the club to ensure as many children as possible



will be able to access the club. We are going to do a registration event again at the end of August (please keep an eye on social media for exact date). There will be NO registration fee this year and NO



waiting list. Everyone from the Saintfield and surrounding area who wants to register their children, will be given the registration details for our club app. You can then book your child into the relevant session providing that there are available spaces. We will be capping our numbers each week so it will be imperative that you book in.

Emma and I are so grateful for the team of volunteers that gave up so many Saturday evenings for the youth club this year. Moving forward, this is a call for more volunteers. It is a huge ask to give up every Saturday but if we get more people to join our team, we are guaranteeing that the club is sustainable for the long term.

We are looking for both adult leaders and youth leaders (over 16s) so if you know someone who is interested, please message our Facebook page or email saintfieldyc@gmail.com

We are really excited to build on what we started last year and look forward to seeing your young people in September. **By Brendan Burns**

A Warm Welcome To Our Newest Team Member



I am delighted to welcome Tanya Kirk O'Neill to the team as our Community Engagement and Social Media Officer for the community heritage park project.

Tanya has a background in community development and community arts and is passionate about creating positive social change.

She is looking forward to engaging

and inspiring local people to contribute to the exciting new developments of the park.

Tanya will be preparing a programme of events and activities to engage local people in the development of the park incorporating the rich heritage of Saintfield, so be sure to stay tuned for these exciting opportunities.

By Martyn Todd

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The Long Road To The Windmill Park

When Down District Council purchased the community centre site in 2013, the obvious place to try for a community park was the 3-acre field immediately behind it, known locally as the Windmill Field.

The site contains the only surviving buildings of an industrial complex from the 18th and 19th centuries. The windmill was built in 1803 and operated until 1839, when the sails were blown off in The Big Wind and never repaired. It is a testament to the high-quality work of the stone masons that the tower is in such good condition today.

The two water mills in the area and another windmill on Todd's Hill, Ballyagherty, have already been demolished, making it all the more important to prevent the surviving windmill from falling into total disrepair.

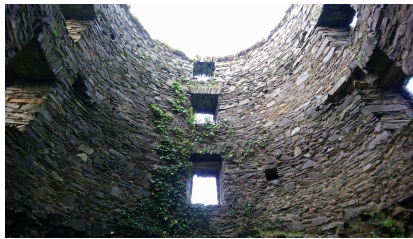
The field was purchased in June 2020 by the community association with a generous donation from David Moffett, an American businessman, whose ancestors left Saintfield in the 18th century. David has visited Saintfield many times and has



researched his family history and its links to Leggygowan and Saintfield.

The first step for the park project team was to carry out a feasibility study to see if there were any barriers to changing the Windmill Field from agricultural use to amenity community use. With the help of a £7,200 grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, this work was completed in 2020 and concluded that there were no barriers to the plan.

The project team, Barbara Graham,



Geoffrey Perrin, Ian Mack, Lawrence Murphy and Martyn Todd, then applied to The National Lottery Heritage Fund for a development phase grant of £135,000. This application was successful and the funding was used to appoint a lead consultant, Paul McMahon of d-on conservation architects.

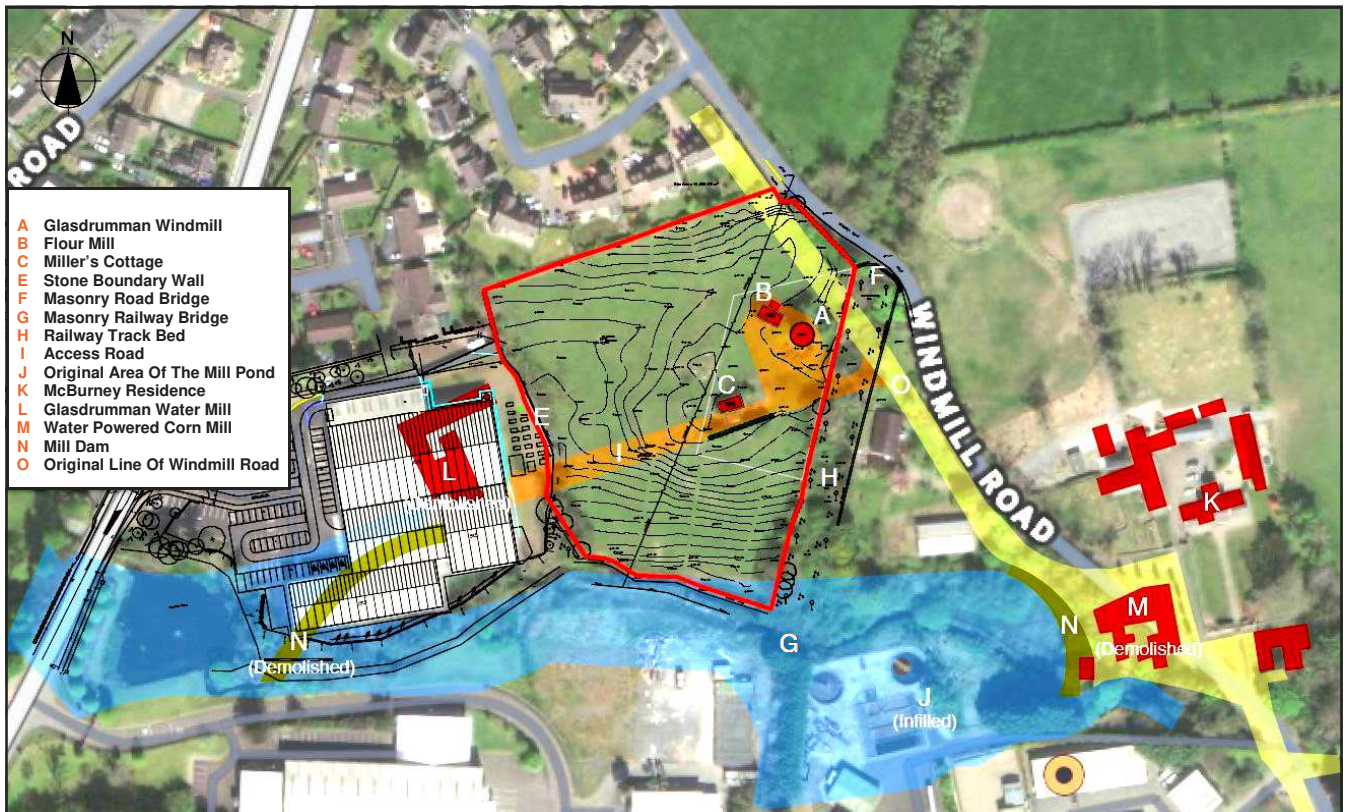
The development work included structural surveys, biodiversity studies, public consultation, a design for the park and applying for planning permission. It also provided costings for implementing the design.

The development phase of the project was completed successfully, on time and within budget, in September 2023. Following a review of this work, The National Lottery Heritage Fund gave SCA permission to apply to them for a delivery phase grant, which was submitted by the project team in November 2023.

TOP: Glasdrumman Windmill and Flour Mill

LEFT: View inside the windmill stump

BELOW: Map of the windmill field and community centre area with industrial infrastructure overlaid



National Lottery Heritage Fund Award Of £903,771

Preparatory work has started on the community heritage park at the Windmill Field after Saintfield Community Association's application to The National Lottery Heritage Fund for a grant was successful.

The three acre site behind Saintfield Community Centre is home to an early 19th century windmill tower, flour mill and millers cottage that are of heritage importance in the area, and the park design includes work to stabilise these key buildings and make them safe to enter. The park is expected to become a reality before the end of 2025.

In May the National Lottery Heritage Fund gave permission to start work on the delivery phase, and the Historic Environment Division of the Department for Communities has now given Scheduled Monument Consent for the stabilisation work planned for the windmill tower and ancillary buildings.

A second bio-blitz of all the species of plants and insects in the field was carried out in July with the help of experts from the National Trust, and the consultant engineers have carried out trial pits in the field to assess ground conditions for the paths.

Following a detailed tender process, the main contractor should be appointed by the end of 2024, with work being completed by the end of 2025.

The final design for the park takes into account feedback from public consultations over the past few years and provides access for all abilities from the community centre car park to the higher ground in the park, including two interpretation panels and viewing points for the windmill and railway track bed.

Seats for relaxation and informal meeting places will be placed in the centre of the park and the lower area includes paths to access the river. There is also an area for outdoor classes for young people to learn about the environment.

The old railway track bed is being maintained as a wildlife corridor and a wetland area will be created to improve the biodiversity of the site. Nesting boxes for birds and bats will be added to the buildings and trees and there will be plantings for pollinators.

With enough volunteer interest, patches of cereals such as those grown and milled in wind and water mills two hundred years ago will be planted and

conservation varieties of fruit trees could be planted.

The project will include recruiting a Community Engagement and Social Media Officer, who will implement a programme of activities to engage people of all ages in the new park. Some volunteers will also be trained as guides for visitors to the park and the wider Saintfield area.

On hearing the good news of the success of this application, Martyn Todd, the project team leader commented: "It is great that all the work over the last 10 years should come to fruition by the end of 2025. This will provide an excellent community park, with Saintfield's industrial heritage highlighted, for local people and visitors to enjoy, for generations to come."

"I would like to thank all those involved - the SCA park project team, SCA board members, the consultant team and Rowallane councillors for their continuing support. And, especially, The National Lottery Heritage Fund and David Moffett, without whom this project could not have happened."



Diagram showing the proposed access routes (brown) linking the Saintfield Community Centre (pink) to the windmill park (green).

Village Bursts Into Bloom - with lots of help from our supporters

This is an exceptionally busy time for the Environmental Greens Team. The Newry Mourne and Down District Council enter us every year for the annual Ulster in Bloom Competition, which covers the whole of NI.

The ethos of the competition is to help instil local pride and to create awareness of the environment and biodiversity. It encourages cross community participation and involvement for those of all ages and abilities, thus bringing people together to create a cleaner and greener area for all to enjoy. It recognises the dedication to improving and maintaining local areas, the participants' time and efforts creating stand-out displays and welcoming outside spaces.

The judges inspect the summer season showcases and look for evidence of methodical planting, weeding, watering and clean-ups - which transform spaces. The Environmental Greens produce many high-quality floral displays and dedicated flowerbeds including bug hotels to boost biodiversity, and create beautiful and welcoming community spaces for people to connect and to be proud of.

The competition, which is run in partnership with



Our new *The Language of Flowers* display at Fair View

Translink and the NI Local Government Association (NILGA), is judged between July and August. You may have noticed the 'Lend a Hand' posters around the village - these are displayed as part of the competition and we gain

marks for their display. They invite everyone to 'lend a hand'. This could be you!

The awards celebrate the work carried out by community groups, volunteers, council teams and Translink staff (in participating bus and train stations). Marks are awarded for horticulture, the environment and community participation.

We wish to thank, most sincerely, the local shops, businesses, churches and individuals who support us

financially. Without their help, we just couldn't do it. They support us and I ask you to support them.

Saintfield has experienced great difficulties over the past months during the upgrade of the footpaths and the installation of new street lighting. Many shops and businesses have taken a huge financial hit due to a severe downturn in footfall. We all love our vibrant village and need it to stay that way. Please support the work we do and support our local shops and businesses. We all need each other!

By *Vivien Lovell*

Community Garden Delivers A Wealth Of Produce



This summer, the community garden has been successful in producing lovely vegetables that include onions, spring onions, courgettes, potatoes, turnip, leeks, Chinese spinach, swiss chard, kohlrabi, peas, cucumber and beetroot.

Beds are being turned over and composted but some hard work is needed to turn clay stone soil into a nutrient-rich growing medium. Tomatoes are green for now and fingers crossed we get warmth and light for good ripening conditions.

Seeds will be sown soon for the winter veg. By *Jackie Morgan*



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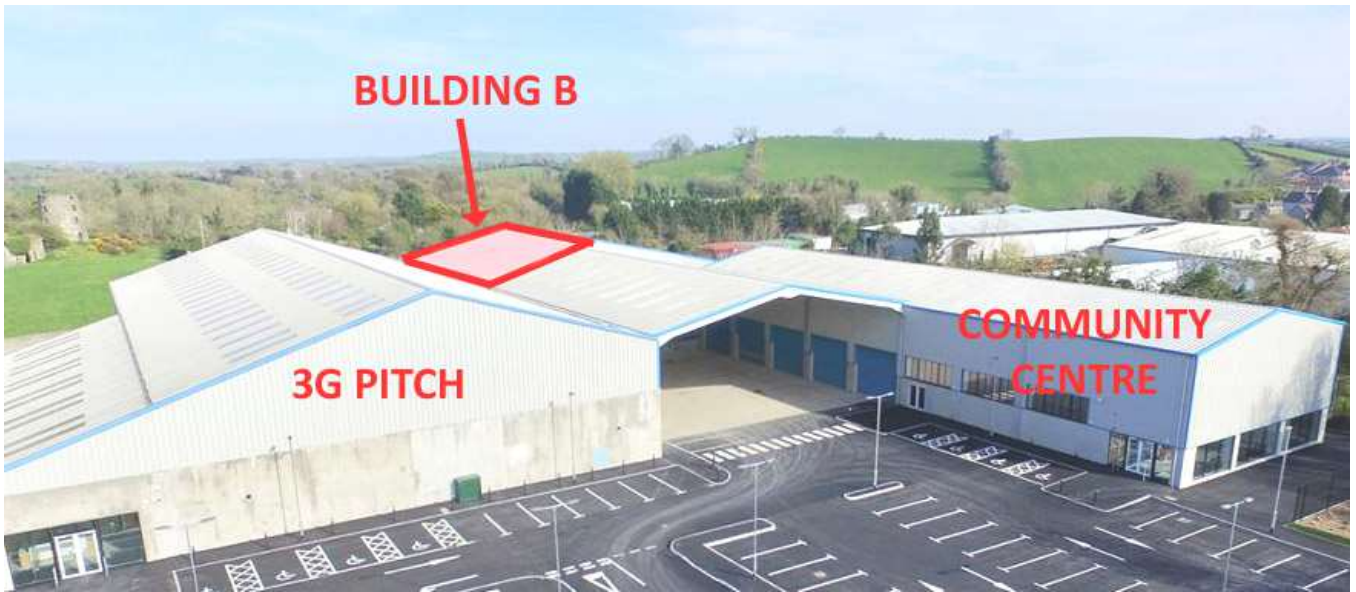
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Community Centre Building B Gets The Green Light



After almost four years working our way through three stages of the ‘expressions of interest’ process, negotiations with Newry Mourne and Down District Council (NMDDC), business & financial planning and planning approval, we finally signed a 25 year lease with NMDDC for Building B on the Community Centre site.

Building B is the one to the rear of the canopy area and extends to approx 750 sq metres (8,000 sq ft). Current plans for this building will provide much-needed multi user space with a dedicated ‘state of the

art’ gymnastics and trampoline facility (not a trampoline park), enabling users to develop their skills to the next level beyond current capabilities and provide additional capacity to increase membership.

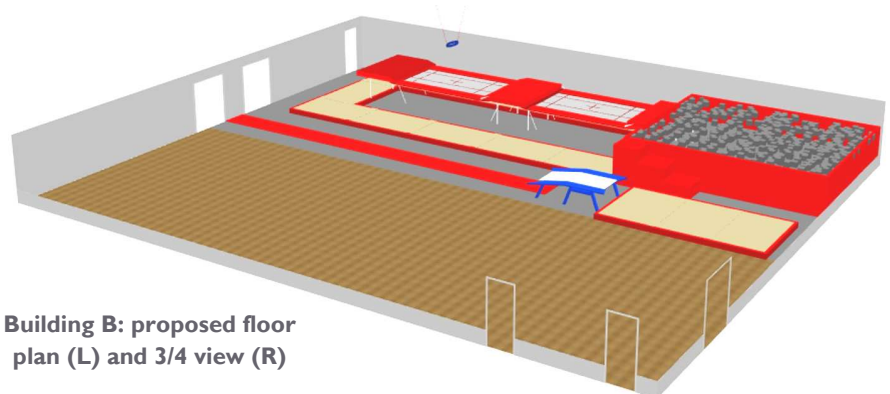
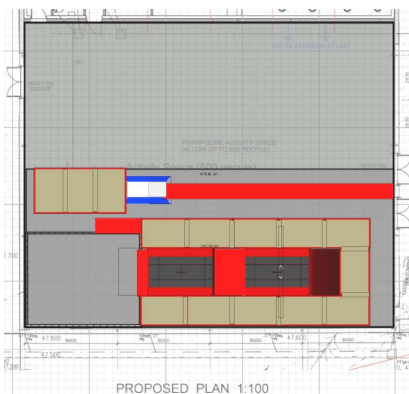
Our architect is currently working on the final design and building control application for Phase I of the development and we hope to go out to tender for the construction work in August.

The Community Centre continues to develop under the daily management of centre manager Kristine Doyle and her

staff with user numbers ahead of target, although July and August are the least busy months as clubs and classes reduce activities due to holidays.

We would encourage local residents and potential users to drop in to see the facility; you will find Kristine at the reception desk most weekday mornings 9am to 12.30pm. Next academic year Saintfield High School will continue to use the Main Hall for additional lunchtime facilities and the 3G pitch for PE.

By *David McMinn*



Building B: proposed floor plan (L) and 3/4 view (R)



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Saintfield Heritage Society celebrated its 50th Anniversary at the Annual Dinner on 16th May 2024 at La Mon Hotel. This occasion provided the perfect opportunity to promote the close relationship between Saintfield Heritage Society and Saintfield Community Association. Both these bodies share so many aims and objectives in promoting Saintfield and the surrounding districts.

The latest in a long line of books produced by SHS over the past 50 years is Book 11 compiled by immediate past Chairman David Williams. The opening article is a comprehensive look at the Windmill Field which is to be developed and opened to the public next year. The purchase and planning for this area was enabled by a major donation from a great friend of Saintfield Mr David Moffett of the USA whose family hail from here.

It was entirely appropriate then that the Guest Speaker at the Anniversary Dinner was David Moffett who gave the 60 plus members an insight into his business career to date and shared his hopes and visions for the finished Windmill Field.

In the photograph are Martyn Todd (Chair of Saintfield Community Association), David Moffett (Guest Speaker & major benefactor) and Ronnie Graham (Chair of Saintfield Heritage Society).

Join Saintfield Heritage Society for a **FREE Guided Walk** around Saintfield on Sunday 15th September as part of this year's European Heritage Open Days.

Meet at the Memorial Garden at the bottom of Comber Street, Saintfield, at 3.00 pm.

This informative walk will last approximately one hour.

SAINTFIELD HERITAGE SOCIETY talks take place in the Studio of Saintfield Community Centre at 8.00 pm

Thursday 12th September

THE HISTORY AND ROLE OF A LORD LIEUTENANT - WHAT DO THEY DO? GAWN ROWAN-HAMILTON has been in the role of Lord Lieutenant of County Down for around 3 years and he will tell us what the role entails as he sees it.

Thursday 10th October

NEW DISCOVERIES FROM THE COASTAL HERITAGE LIDAR SURVEY OF THE NORTH DOWN AND STRANGFORD AREA - COLIN DUNLOP, Marine Historic Environment Adviser at DAERA, will look at some of the most interesting and previously unidentified archaeological heritage sites found along the Ards Peninsula and around Strangford Lough in a recent highly detailed aerial survey. Rescheduled from last year.

Thursday 13th November

THE DISTRACTION OF THE TIMES - WITNESSES TO THE REBELLION IN SAINTFIELD AND SURROUNDING AREA - LINDA MCKENNA, Heritage Officer at NMDD Council with her recent research of a variety of archival sources to highlight the voices of many local people impacted by the rebellion and its aftermath in Saintfield and surrounding areas.



Saintfield Community Association

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