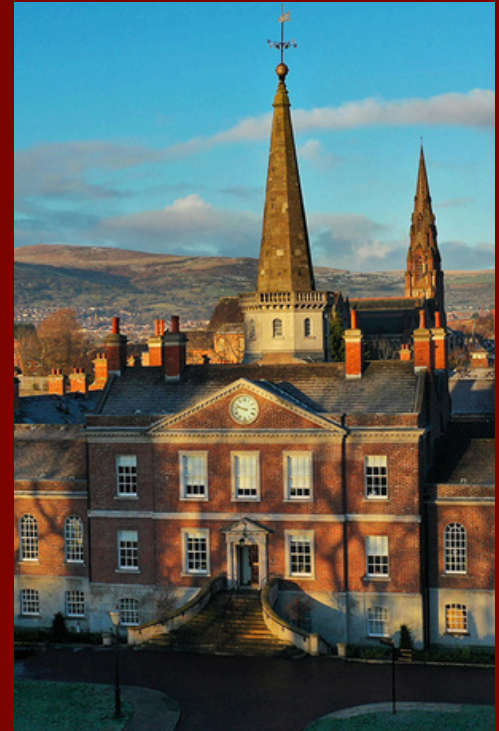
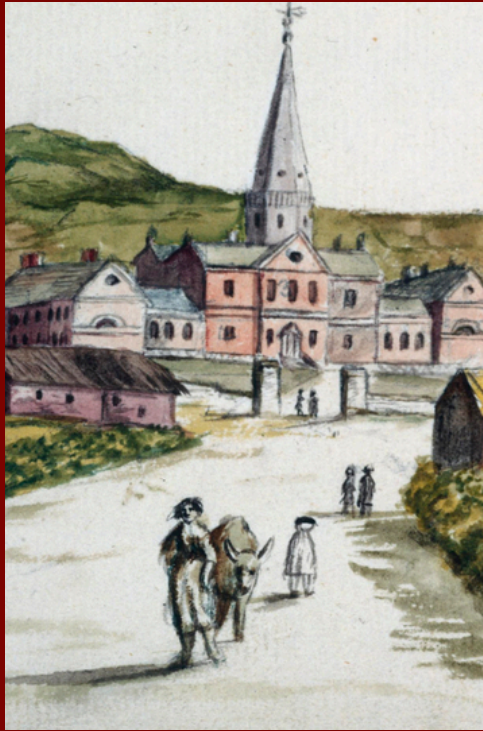




Annual Report

Year ending September 2024



Celebrating 250 years of our home, Clifton House (1774 - 2024)

Objects

Founded in 1752, Belfast Charitable Society is the city’s oldest known charity which was incorporated in 1774 by an Act of the Parliament of Ireland. In 1996, to ensure that the Society was “able to serve the present day and likely future needs of the community”, a new Act of Parliament, ‘Belfast Charitable Society Act’, was passed. It sets out the objects, powers, constitution and management of the Society. The Objects of the Society as stated in the Act are:

- (a) To pursue all or any charitable activities which advance the interests or are for the benefit of persons appearing to the Society to be disadvantaged, primarily in Northern Ireland, including the care of the elderly, the relief of poverty, homelessness, distress, infirmity and sickness and providing for the educational and other needs of such persons; and
- (b) To participate in and encourage all forms of co-operation among appropriate parties which are calculated to achieve any of the objects mentioned in paragraph (a) above.

Belfast Charitable Society is registered as a charity with HMRC (Charity Registration no XN45101).
The charity registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland on 25 April 2016 (NIC 104998).
Its principal office and registered office is Clifton House, 2 North Queen Street, Belfast BT15 1ES.



Staff and Volunteers at Heritage Day



Talk on Education and Disadvantage



Street Soccer NI team at Homeless World Cup

Belfast Charitable Society

(Established 1752, Incorporated 1774)

President

Sir Ronald Weatherup

Board Members

Mr David Watters (Chair to Mar'24)

Prof Alastair Adair (Chair from Mar'24)

Mr Glenn Bradley (Elected Mar'24)

Mrs Siobhan Brown

Mr Aidan Bennett (Elected Mar'24)

Ms Christine Donnelly (Co-opted Aug 2024)

Mr Ian Elliott (Hon Treasurer–died Dec'23)

Mr Colin Graham (Hon Sec from Mar'24)

Mr Mark Glover (Elected Mar'24)

Mr Matthew Higgins

Mr Alan Moneypenny

(Hon Sec to Mar'24)

Mrs Eileen Mooney (Elected Mar'24)

Mrs Norma Sinte

Clifton House Centre Ltd

(Incorporated 2012)

Directors

Mr Colin Graham (Chair)

Mrs Siobhan Brown

Mr Paul Carlin

Mr Philip Hall

Mr Matthew Higgins

Mr Erskine Holmes

Mary Ann McCracken Foundation

(Incorporated 2019)

Directors

Mrs Norma Sinte (Chair)

Prof Alastair Adair (from Mar '24)

Mr Les Allamby

Ms Angila Chada

Mr Colin Graham

Ms Diane Graham

Dr Margaret Ward

Mr David Watters (to Mar'24)

Ms Paula Reynolds

(Company Secretary)

Management

Ms Paula Reynolds - Chief Executive

Chair's Report

As I embark on this new role as Chair, firstly I must note the loss of our dear friend and colleague Mr Alan Money Penny who sadly passed away in July 2024. Alan was a great asset to the Society and served for almost ten years, the latter three as Honorary Secretary.

In March 2024 I replaced David Watters who had successfully led the organisation for 12 years, guiding it from the risks associated with the direct provision of older people's care into a new phase that reflected its wider philanthropic past and overall object 'to address disadvantage'.

Last year's report summarised the Society's many achievements under his leadership, but of note during this reporting period, was the grant of over £155,000 to help 34 North Belfast schools meet the immediate need of hunger experienced by pupils. During winter 2023 -2024 this fund gave 12,000 pupils access to a nutritious meal, alleviating pressure on families budgets and setting them up to learn in the classroom.

Our annual Benn Dinner in December 2023 saw the launch of a wonderful programme of activity to mark an astonishing 250 years of Clifton House. I am delighted to have been directly involved in the celebrations and activity throughout my first term in office. All of which is noteworthy and detailed in this report, but I would like to share with you some of my highlights.

Our extremely generous and diligent President, Sir Ronnie Weatherup dedicated much time and personal resource to research and produce a book about the Society's legislative context since the 1700's. This was launched during the year and has been shared among numerous stakeholders including schools, universities and practitioners of law and social policy. Thank you, Sir Ronnie.

He also chaired a series of challenging conversations about poverty and disadvantage, to help inform the future work of the Society. In each instance bringing experts, academics and those working in the related fields into our Boardroom – the most fitting of environments– to talk about the current state of issues such as education, the life of migrants here and homelessness.



Alastair Adair
Chair

On a lighter note, I, with hundreds if not thousands of others, have thoroughly enjoyed the stories that fuelled the social media campaigns from January 2024 – stories of the characters, rich and poor, associated with the building; and factual accounts of how the Society has had such a significant influence in the local area, Belfast wide and beyond our shores.

One highlight for me was the Heritage Day hosted in the house and grounds on 1st September. I shared a great day of entertainment, music, and heritage activity with my family, colleagues and over 1,000 visitors. I was very proud to welcome the Lord Mayor and people from far and wide to enjoy Clifton House. The celebration also honoured our Founding Fathers and strengthened many relationships we have, particularly with Radius Housing and the residents who also call Clifton House ‘home’.

During the year we continued build on other strategic partnerships working with: Triangle Housing Association on a potential capital project - I want to thank them for their time and expertise; the BHSCT on a new capital project that I hope comes into fruition soon; numerous other independent funders to ensure the support to those working to address grassroots disadvantage eg The James Kane Foundation.

The Board remained ever mindful of safeguarding the charity’s assets. We negotiated changes to the nursing home lease ensuring the annual income is maintained to enable us to deliver charitable activities.

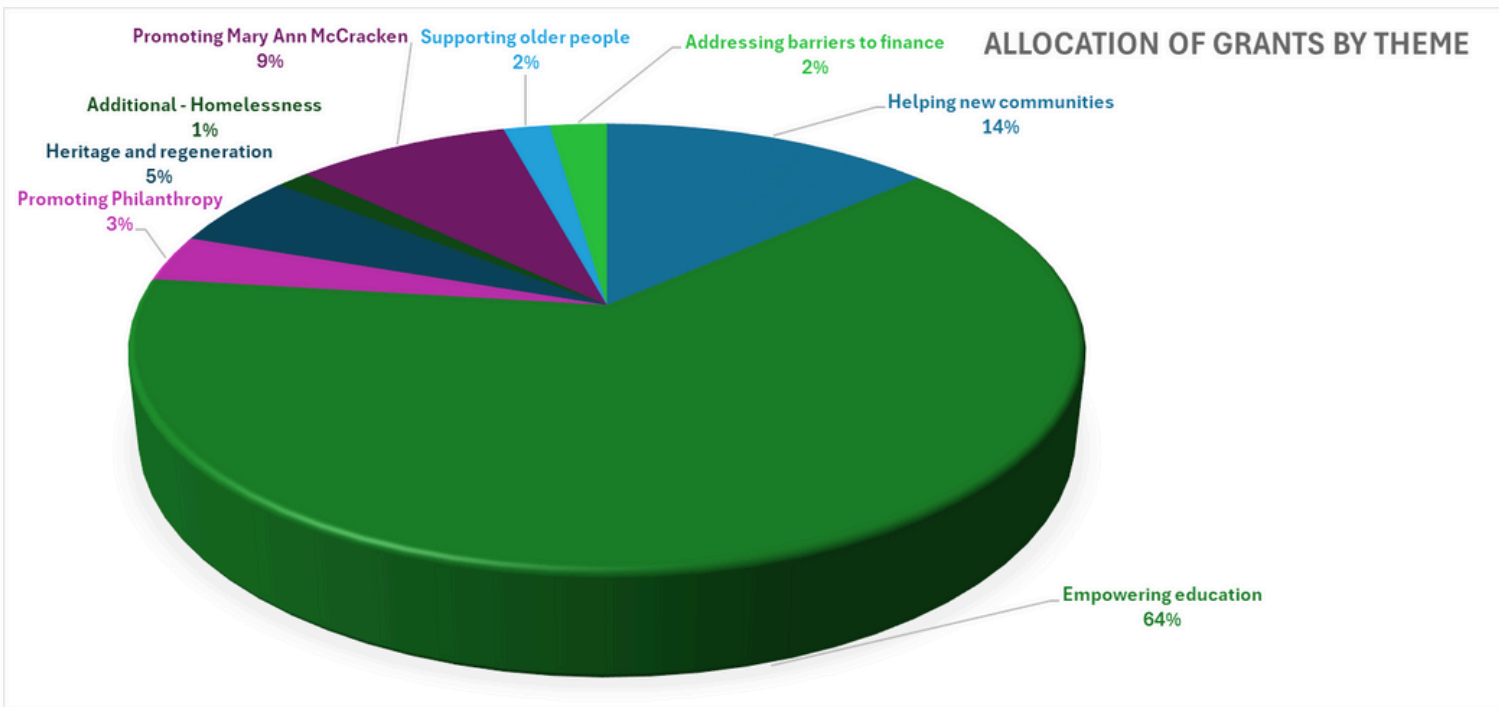
Finally, I wish to thank several people: those who gave substantial grants and donations including the NLHF, DLD Fund, Nugent and Mallaghan’s Engineering firms. I offer my gratitude to Sir Ronnie, my Board and Committee colleagues, particularly four new Board members; and all volunteers and staff for their tireless contribution to this marvellous organisation.

I commend to you this report for the year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alastair Adair". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Finances, activities, and impact of Belfast Charitable Society and its subsidiaries

The Society continues to encourage and influence philanthropy to address disadvantage - in this, its 272nd year, it allocated more than £304,000 of its funds as direct grants including an allocation of £155,358 to fund school meals, leveraging a further £625,000 through collaborations. It committed £75,000 into next year's budget, for grantees whose projects were delayed due to timing issues.



Grants: Empowering education and enhancing access to employability

A significant percentage of the Society's grants were awarded to projects that empower people to access education, to enhance skills, and improve employability. These included:

North Belfast Early Intervention Project

- 75 families: 82 parents and 157 children received support to improve daily life (of these children, 101 experience neurodiversity)
- Interventions included: referrals to over 100 organisations e.g. GPs, health visitors, teachers, educational welfare and psychologists.

Mary Ann McCracken Bursary Programme

- 87 pupils aged 16 years plus from 12 North Belfast post primary schools awarded bursaries
- 13 to continue to A 'Level'; 25 supported to move into further education; 48 to access employment
- Six funders collaborated: Hunter Smyth, Mary Ann McCracken Foundation, The James Kane Foundation, Raj Darshna Foundation, LFT and the Belfast Charitable Society.

Ulster Orchestra Crescendo Project

- 120 pupils aged 4 – 11 from four North and West Belfast schools involved in workshops in musicianship and instrumental tuition
- P3 and P7 pupils performed at the Ulster Hall with the full orchestra to an audience of 600
- 12 funders created a total contribution of almost £70,000.



Launch of Mary Ann McCracken Bursary Programme



Ulster Orchestra Crescendo Project

Teenager builds robot to solve Rubik's Cube



BBC Coverage of North Belfast Creative Digital Hub



North Belfast Youth Choir performing at AGM 2024



North Belfast Youth Choir at Parliament Buildings

Grants: Empowering education and enhancing access to employability (continued)

North Belfast Creative digital Hub

- 1000 pupils developed digital and creative skills together
- Five post primary schools involved; breaking down gender, religious and socio-economic barriers to learning
- 45 teachers delivered the curriculum in new ways e.g. VR headsets used to teach physics, geography and biology
- State-of-the-art kit enabling use of latest software e.g. Google Workspace Skills, Lego and Minecraft coding, App design & animation
- Extensive industry, university and wider educational sector buy-in.

The North Belfast Youth Choir

- 70 young people from across the North Belfast area participated
- Professional instruction and access to the highest standard of performance
- Performances included:
 - City of Derry International Choir Festival (National Youth Choir 2nd place)
 - Mansion House London
 - Opening of the new train station at York Street - performance for the general public and invited guests
 - Speaker's Dinner at Parliament Buildings, Stormont - performance to international delegates.

Grants: Empowering education and enhancing access to employability (continued)

Baroness May Blood Bursary programme

- A new Mary Ann McCracken Award was presented to a student from the Shankill area to attend UU Art and Design degree.

School Meals North Belfast Fund

The Society funded an additional £155,500 in the year providing:

- Meals to almost 12,000 young people - 6,391 primary and 5,512 post primary pupils
- Support to 34 schools helping to provide food for children who were experiencing hunger.

An additional £96,000 was raised from other funders to support this cause.

The impact of the School Meals Fund:

- 82% of schools stated it was a lifeline for parents/ carers
- 76% stated that the nutritious meal meant children were able to learn
- Attendance and punctuality improved due to the breakfast club
- Parents / carers felt able to open up about their financial struggles
- Community involvement in school life increased
- Attendance at the 'meals' improved social skills.



Baroness May Blood Bursary



Cost of Living School Meals Grants

Grants: Helping new communities

Grants were awarded to support new communities to integrate and settle into their new lives.

ANAKA Migrant Women's Collective – this grant supports women and young people to improve education, skills and employability by providing:

- Two English conversational classes per week; and weekly basic computer classes in Arabic
- Five English volunteer teachers and three maths volunteer teachers delivering online homework clubs
- Cambridge English courses to 30 young people preparing them for school and college admission
- Support for 15 young people allowing the completion of university and third level English qualifications
- Support for 86 young people who are newly granted refugees and asylum seekers (around half of whom were unaccompanied minors) to attend weekly English classes taught by TESOL Masters' degree students and professors from QUB
- Funding for four large scale volunteer led children's activities eg Christmas & Eid celebrations, Easter and Summer art workshops, and outdoor trips
- Numerous stakeholders' meetings held to discuss the development of the education project. Participants included school principals, politicians and community groups.



ANAKA with Equal Access to Education Campaign reporter Eve Rosato.



ANAKA S.E.L.F Classes at QUB



Coverage of 'Equal Access to Education' event at Stormont with Oliver Jeffers.

Grants: Regeneration through heritage

The Society continued to support work in regenerating the local area by providing 5% funding to the North Belfast Heritage Cluster's "Re-creating a Great Place" project. The Cluster is comprised of 12 members, responsible for heritage assets from St Anne's Cathedral to Duncairn Arts centre, Antrim Road and the North Belfast Working Men's Club, Crumlin Road.

Achievements in the year included:

- Direct development support to members via Community Wealth Building approach to governance and asset building
- Building strategic partnerships e.g. Belfast City Council; National Churches' Trust and NI War Memorial
- Enhanced public engagement e.g. Look North Festival 2024, EHOD and additional walking tours of the area
- Engaging others through social media, focused on: the festive season; architects and aspirations; medical history and stories from Clifton Street Cemetery
- Eight seed funds awarded for projects including marketing, storytelling, improving access to buildings and governance
- Development of a series of Oral History projects e.g. Heritage Day at Clifton House with 80 individuals sharing their stories of the Cluster's buildings
- Physical improvement works through the development of lighting and green spacing plans for six members
- Initiated waste management audit and recycling plans and an environmental sustainability audit template.



Launch of Re-Creating a Great Place



Oral History Harvest at Heritage Day

Grants: Influencing and encouraging Philanthropy

The Society continues to support the Funders Forum NI, facilitating its monthly meetings and conferences.

Additional Grants - The Society contributed to:

- Mary Ann – The Forgotten Sister play by the Kabosh Theatre, set in the grounds of Clifton House.
- A small winter coat fund, which purchased 25 coats for local children
- Street Soccer NI – Homeless World Cup in Seoul, South Korea sending 15 homeless people and six staff to the tournament; of the 15 players: 10 are now working / volunteering, two have completed Level 1 coaching qualifications, and two are at university.

Allocation of donations – The Society allocated donations given or bequeathed to it:

- Tom Howard bequest – provided 70 older people with food parcels and wider wraparound support e.g. referrals to GP via our donation to the Peoples Kitchen’s Older People’s project
- Norman Caters bequest - via our donation to the Old Library Trust, L’Derry – provided dementia training to 26 Macmillan Cancer Services staff and volunteers, 41 first year paramedics and 381 first year community nurses
- Hunter Smyth – supported Mary Ann McCracken Bursary Awards providing 87 bursaries to post primary school pupils
- NI Water Fund – supported a year long programme of social activity for 27 dementia residents in Clifton House and a further 39 residents received contribution towards their History Harvest and photographic exhibition project.



Dementia Training for
Macmillan Cancer services



Photo Exhibition by Clifton House residents



Homeless World Cup
Women's Team

Clifton House Centre Limited

Throughout 2024 the Belfast Charitable Society celebrated the significant 250th anniversary of Clifton House by delivering a programme of activities and legacy projects in order to: raise awareness of Clifton House; engage a wider range of members of the public and stakeholders in our activities; and gather evidence and wider opinion on what poverty looks like today.

Activity was delivered by staff and volunteers, and included:

- Heritage Day event – attracting over 1,000 people into Clifton House and grounds
- Two Open Days – over 250 members of the public visited
- Eight President’s talks – chaired conversations focused on: 1798, Equiano, the early days of the Poor House, education and disadvantage, the challenges facing refugees, health & medicine in 18th Century Belfast. radical women, and our Founding Fathers
- 22 house tours and 21 cemetery tours – including themed tours: Halloween, medical history of Belfast Charitable Society and 1798 Rebellion
- 34 Private Tours - University of Fribourg, National Trust Divis & Black Mountain, Age Concern
- 18 Private Talks - Newtownabbey Women’s Probus, Wolfe Tone conference, Radius Housing and a Mary Ann McCracken talk at Linenhall Library with 90 attendees
- Partnership working with NI Museum Council, Belfast City Council, CQAF, Feile and Look North Festival
- Monthly exhibitions highlighting the historic themes, featuring items from BBC’s ‘A Stitch Through Time’; archive items returned from the Society’s solicitors; NMNI archive collection, St Malachy’s College including Mary Ann McCracken’s Irish Grammar book; mysterious medical chest from QUB.



Heritage Day





January - Marcus Patton talk on Clifton House's early development



February - Social Media Campaign about education filmed at Ulster Folk Museum



March - Talk on the challenges facing refugees



April - Exhibition on the Mystery Medical Chest



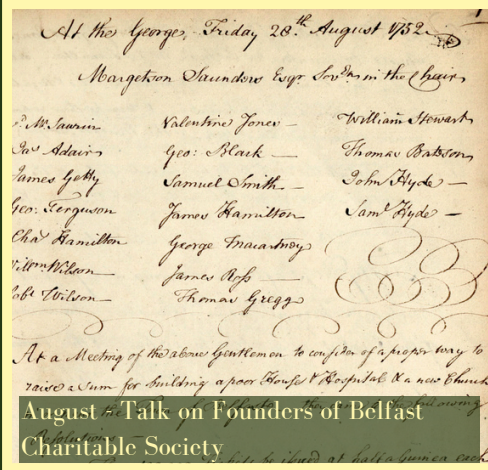
May - North Belfast Heritage Cluster Walking Tour



June - Dr Catriona Kennedy talk on Martha McTier and Mary Ann McCracken



July - Mary Ann McCracken Open Day

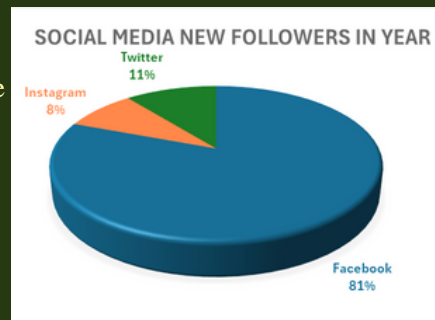


Clifton House Centre: 250th Anniversary Achievements

The 250th Anniversary celebrations enabled Clifton House to share its history wider than ever before. The breadth of activities attracted new audiences and enabled additional connections and partnerships to inform the future work of the Society by providing insights into how poverty affects people today.

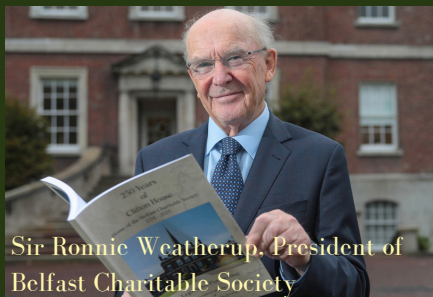
Impact:

- Attracted 2,800 visitors to Clifton House, over 60% of whom had never been before
- Visitor numbers attending tours and talks increased by more than a third
- Online visitors to www.cliftonbelfast.com tripled
- Growth in social media reach: FB up 117%; Instagram up 468% and 1,236 new followers across all platforms
- Increased conference visitors, with room hire and hospitality revenue up 20%.



Legacy Projects:

- Education resource for primary schools, based on the history of the house and Belfast Charitable Society
- Our President, Sir Ronnie Weatherup, compiled a book on the history of the Society and Clifton House entitled 'A Legislative Perspective' for the anniversary



The Mary Ann McCracken Foundation: established to celebrate the life and works of this remarkable woman. She was profiled through:

- The unveiling of a statue to her by Belfast City Council on International Women's Day, March 2024 – the Foundation provided the historical information that guided the design and creation of the statue.
- The production and performance of the play, 'Mary Ann, The Forgotten Sister', by Kabosh Theatre in April performed to 270 people
- A talk by Dr Catriona Kennedy on 'Women, Radicalism and Eighteenth-Century Belfast', focusing on Mary Ann and Martha McTier, was attended by 70 people
- Tours: 13 public tours were held alongside six private tours for groups and a family connected with the McCracken family
- Talks: three private talks to groups, focussing on 'Thomas Russell and Mary Ann' and 'Winfred Carney and Mary Ann'
- An primary school education resource pack, drafted with consultants and students from Ulster University Science Shop to help tell the story of Mary Ann and the Belfast Charitable Society
- Social media: telling the story of Mary Ann, and women who shaped her life
- Exhibitions: including window display in Visit Belfast visitor centre during the statue unveiling and in Clifton House the display of artefacts and images provided by Tom McNeill, Ruth Tallion, and Down County Museum in Clifton House
- Working with others, including involvement in the Look North! Festival, the Cathedral Arts Festival and Feile an Phobail
- Challenging conversations, reflecting Mary Ann's work, as part of the 250th anniversary of Clifton House.



Thank You

Ashton Community Trust
Barbour and Coburn Family
Belfast Cathedral - Cathedral Church of St Anne
Belfast Junior Chamber of Trade
Belfast Orange Hall
Carnegie Oldpark Library
Cathie McKimm
Consarc Design Group
DfC Covid Recovery Employment and Skills Initiative Programme
Department of Foreign Affairs, Dublin
Duncairn Arts Centre
Fredrick Street Meeting Place
Funders Forum NI
Halifax Foundation for Northern Ireland
Hunter Smyth Fund
Indian Community Centre
Irish Academic Press
James Kane Foundation
Lady Moyra Quigley
LFT Charitable Trust
Linen Hall Library
Martin and Hamilton
Milibern Trust
National Lottery Community Fund

National Lottery Heritage Fund
National Museums Northern Ireland
Niamh Goggin
North Belfast Area Learning Community
Northern Ireland Central Investment Fund for Charities
North Belfast Workings Men's Club
Public Records Office NI
Queens University Belfast
Radius Housing
Redeemers Central
Raj Darshna Foundation
St Malachy's College
St Patricks Church, Donegall Street
Tom Brown
The Belfast Jesuit Centre
Thomas Howard Fund
Triangle Housing Association
Ulster Garden Villages
Ulster University
Wollstonecraft Foundation

Special thanks to all of our dedicated volunteers

Thank you also to all those who supported the 250th Anniversary of Clifton House

Aaron McIntyre

Ashleigh Galway, Curry Primary School

Belfast City Council

BBC NI

Annie McColgan & Aoife Harvey

Armstrong Storytelling Trust

Belfast City Council

Belfast Harbour Commission

Belfast Media Group

Blueprint Development

Prof Catriona Kennedy, University of York

Dr Ciara Fitzpatrick, UU

Decowells Restoration

DLD Trust (O'Neill Family)

Dr Cormac Leonard

Epidemic Belfast / Ulster University

Dr Esther McGuinness, UU

Gerry McNamee

Prof Grainne McKeever, UU

Prof Guy Beiner

Kathleen's Attic

Kelly Morris

Lord Mayor of Belfast

Mallaghans Engineering

Marcus Patton

Baroness Margaret Ritchie

Martin Moreland, Mercy College

Myrtle Hill

National Museums NI

Newington Credit Union

Professor Noel Purdy

NI Water

Nugent Engineering

Quarto Collective

Queens University Belfast

Dr Robyn Atcheson

Ruth Flood Associates

Ruth Taillon

Salwa Alsharabi, ANAKA

Simon Community

Stranmillis University College

Totten Electrical

Ulster Architectural Heritage Society

Ulster Orchestra

Ulster University - Science Shop, Speakers and
Fine Art Degree Students

Uncommon Heritage

Vicky Tennent, UNHCR

Visit Belfast

Volunteer Now

Clifton House is home to the Belfast Charitable Society and the Mary Ann McCracken Foundation.
It houses our archive, heritage and conference centre and is available for private hire.
History tours and talks are available to book at CliftonBelfast.com



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