



the famous faces of  
**north belfast**





St Anne's Cathedral



Jennymount Mill



Hazelbank Park



Belfast Castle



Albert Clock

## acknowledgements

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The publishers wish to apologise for any notable omissions but due to the restrictions of space it has not been possible to include all those who deserve a place on these pages.

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# Stretching from towering Cave Hill to the waterfront from which so much of Belfast's wealth was generated, North Belfast has played a vital role in the city's life from its 17th century origins onwards.

Since the 1770s, when Thomas McCabe and John McCracken (father of United Irishmen leader Henry Joy) installed machinery in the Clifton Street Poorhouse, enabling it to become the first cotton spinning mill in the town, North Belfast has hosted many of the industries in which Belfast led the world. Already pre-eminent in cotton, the Mulholland family laid the foundations of Belfast's famous linen industry in the early part of the 19th century. Their York Street Mill was the largest of its kind in the world, as indeed was Gallaher's tobacco factory, which covered four acres, also in York Street.

It was on the North Belfast side of the Lagan that William Ritchie built Belfast's first shipbuilding dynasty in the late 18th century, the precursor of an industry that would dominate the world. As Belfast developed into one of Europe's most

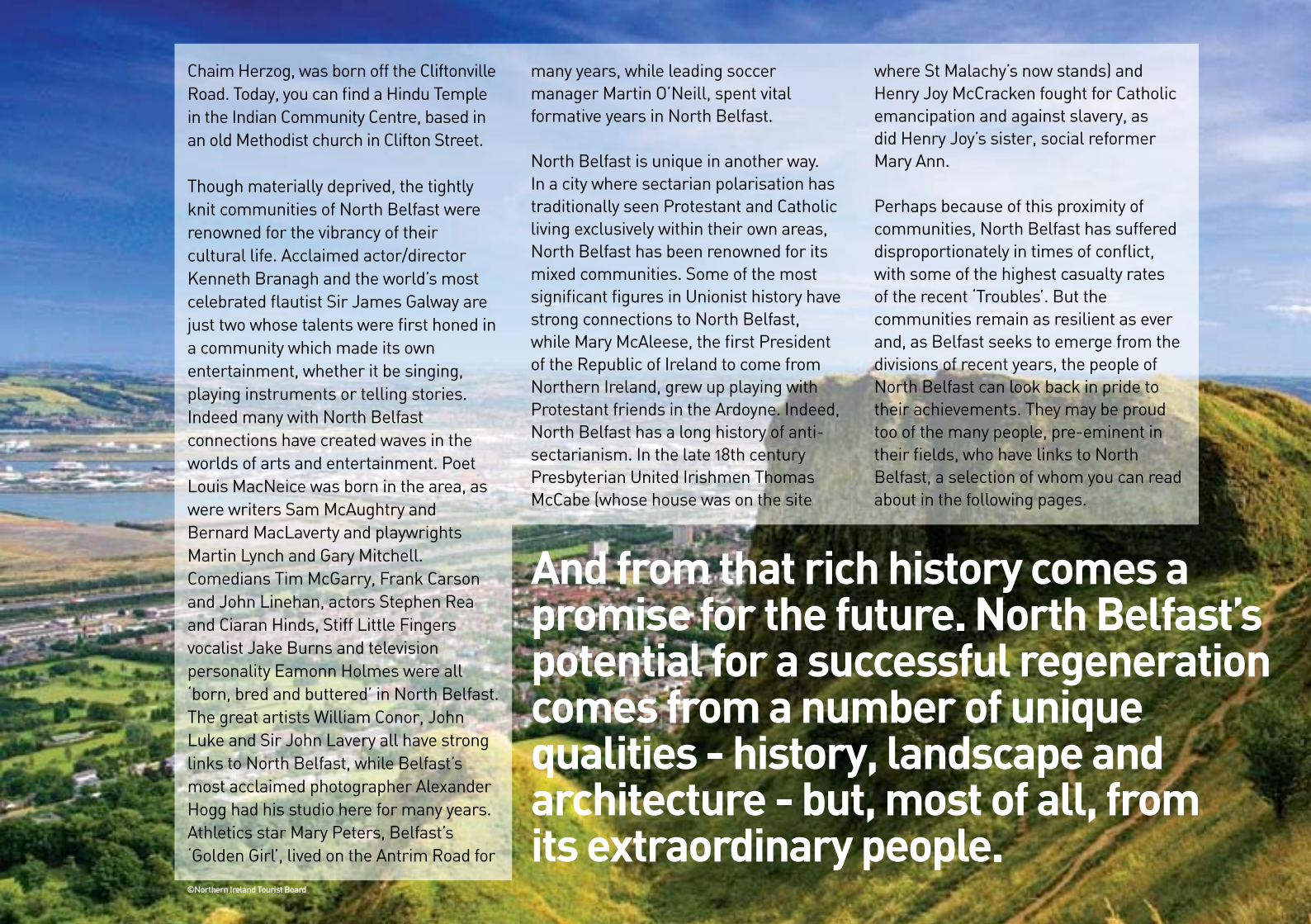
important ports in the latter half of the 19th century, the docks area, not least the atmospheric Sailortown, became a bustling city within a city.

Sailortown also epitomised another aspect of North Belfast - the extraordinary resilience and character of its communities. For all the wealth created by Belfast's powerful industrialists and entrepreneurs, a legacy that can still be traced in some of the magnificent houses on the upper reaches of the Antrim Road, little trickled down to the workers themselves. Life for them, as it was generally for the working class in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland at this time, was tough from cradle to grave, with harsh working conditions and poor housing. Perhaps that explains the number of politicians with strong links to North Belfast who became renowned for fighting for social justice.

Those profiled in this booklet include William Walker, Harry Midgely, Gerry Fitt and Kate Hoey. It is fitting that one of the United Kingdom's most renowned political commentators, John Cole, should also be a native of North Belfast. Before leaving for her life's work in India, the famous missionary Amy Carmichael first helped set up the Welcome Evangelical Church in Cambrai Street to serve the poor of the area.

North Belfast has many unique features, including some of Belfast's most iconic historic buildings, such as the Crumlin Road Gaol and Courthouse, the Royal Exchange Building, Clifton House and Belfast Castle high on Cave Hill, Belfast's most famous natural feature which gave Jonathan Swift the inspiration for Gulliver's Travels. The natural beauty of North Belfast's outer reaches is matched by popular parks like the Waterworks, a favourite childhood haunt of many you will read about in this booklet.

The area is famous for its schools and churches too, such as St Malachy's, Belfast Royal Academy, St Anne's Cathedral (Belfast Cathedral) and St Patrick's Roman Catholic Church. Other religions too have felt at home in North Belfast. Sir Otto Jaffe, Belfast's only Jewish Lord Mayor, helped fund a synagogue near Carlisle Circus for the area's once thriving Jewish community, while Israel's longest serving President,



Chaim Herzog, was born off the Cliftonville Road. Today, you can find a Hindu Temple in the Indian Community Centre, based in an old Methodist church in Clifton Street.

Though materially deprived, the tightly knit communities of North Belfast were renowned for the vibrancy of their cultural life. Acclaimed actor/director Kenneth Branagh and the world's most celebrated flautist Sir James Galway are just two whose talents were first honed in a community which made its own entertainment, whether it be singing, playing instruments or telling stories. Indeed many with North Belfast connections have created waves in the worlds of arts and entertainment. Poet Louis MacNeice was born in the area, as were writers Sam McAughtry and Bernard MacLaverty and playwrights Martin Lynch and Gary Mitchell. Comedians Tim McGarry, Frank Carson and John Linehan, actors Stephen Rea and Ciaran Hinds, Stiff Little Fingers vocalist Jake Burns and television personality Eamonn Holmes were all 'born, bred and buttered' in North Belfast. The great artists William Conor, John Luke and Sir John Lavery all have strong links to North Belfast, while Belfast's most acclaimed photographer Alexander Hogg had his studio here for many years. Athletics star Mary Peters, Belfast's 'Golden Girl', lived on the Antrim Road for

many years, while leading soccer manager Martin O'Neill, spent vital formative years in North Belfast.

North Belfast is unique in another way. In a city where sectarian polarisation has traditionally seen Protestant and Catholic living exclusively within their own areas, North Belfast has been renowned for its mixed communities. Some of the most significant figures in Unionist history have strong connections to North Belfast, while Mary McAleese, the first President of the Republic of Ireland to come from Northern Ireland, grew up playing with Protestant friends in the Ardoyne. Indeed, North Belfast has a long history of anti-sectarianism. In the late 18th century Presbyterian United Irishmen Thomas McCabe (whose house was on the site

where St Malachy's now stands) and Henry Joy McCracken fought for Catholic emancipation and against slavery, as did Henry Joy's sister, social reformer Mary Ann.

Perhaps because of this proximity of communities, North Belfast has suffered disproportionately in times of conflict, with some of the highest casualty rates of the recent 'Troubles'. But the communities remain as resilient as ever and, as Belfast seeks to emerge from the divisions of recent years, the people of North Belfast can look back in pride to their achievements. They may be proud too of the many people, pre-eminent in their fields, who have links to North Belfast, a selection of whom you can read about in the following pages.

**And from that rich history comes a promise for the future. North Belfast's potential for a successful regeneration comes from a number of unique qualities - history, landscape and architecture - but, most of all, from its extraordinary people.**

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instantly recognisable  
classical musicians on  
the planet”**





# sir james galway

## THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN FLUTE

'The Man with the Golden Flute' was born in Vere Street in North Belfast on December 8th 1939. James was born into a musical family. His father, also called James, a riveter at Harland & Wolff, had learned the flute from his own father, another James, and was a talented piano accordionist who played with several small dance bands. From earliest childhood, Sir James recalls being surrounded by musical instruments with his father playing a wide range of music from Mozart to marching tunes. This was not unusual.

"Most people in our street played a musical instrument," Sir James recalls. He remembers attending many nights of music at local houses with his brother, where the talents of his father and mother Ethel, who played piano, were in demand. "There was no babysitting in those days," he says, "so we went along too and absorbed the atmosphere".

Though money was tight, Sir James denies it was a tough upbringing and would not have swapped his background for any other. "Everyone was in the same boat," he says, "and because no one had any money, what we didn't have, we didn't miss." It was a happy childhood, with long days exploring North Belfast, playing with mates in Fortwilliam Park, fighting with bows and arrows made from sticks and swimming off Belfast Lough, eating every mussel and clam they could find. Self-motivated, the young

James graduated from mouthorgan to penny whistle to flute, the instrument which truly inspired him. He joined the **Onward Flute Band** at the age of nine and later won three gold medals at the Irish Flute Championships.

Early flute lessons were taught by his Uncle Joe, before lessons were arranged with an English flautist living in Belfast, Muriel Dawn. "She really opened up the world of the flute to me," Sir James recalls. He also began playing with the **Belfast Youth Orchestra**, recently set up by Muriel's husband Douglas. John Francis, who taught the flute at the Royal College of Music, saw James play and insisted he come to London to study under him. James continued to study at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, followed by the Paris Conservatory. He began his illustrious career at the **Sadler's Wells Opera** and the **Royal Opera** in Covent Garden, followed by stints with the **BBC Symphony Orchestra** and **London Symphony Orchestra**. In 1969, he was appointed Principal Flute of the **Berlin Philharmonic**, which, under the legendary conductor Herbert von Karajan, was viewed as the world's greatest orchestra.

Since launching his solo career, he has become one of the most instantly recognisable classical musicians on the planet, playing alongside the world's leading orchestras, releasing many popular CD's and appearing on television around the world. He has starred at all the major music festivals and concert halls, as well as Buckingham Palace and the Vatican, and appeared before presidents and royalty. In 1979 he received the Order of the British Empire (OBE) and in 2001 was knighted for services to music.

# gary mitchell

## AWARD-WINNING PLAYWRIGHT

Described by the Guardian newspaper as one of the most talked about voices in European theatre, Gary Mitchell was born in the North Belfast suburb of Rathcoole, where he lived for many years. Despite leaving Rathcoole Secondary School at the age of fifteen without having ever seen or even read a play, the prolific writer has since won numerous awards for his plays and screenplays.

After leaving school he endured long periods of unemployment before taking on a clerical job, which he found dull. Though living among a community which had little interest in theatre, he found an outlet in a local drama club, but within a largely Catholic group could not identify with the Protestant roles he was asked to portray. "I wanted to do a play where I was the hero, a young Protestant against the world" he said later, "but I couldn't find a suitable play." His answer was to write his own, and in 1990 he completed, **The World of Flesh and the Devil**, which won a BBC Radio 4 Young Playwrights Festival Award and effectively launched his career. "I was just writing my own experiences," he said of it, "Rathcoole is a great place for stories". Acclaim and awards followed in equal measure and Gary was hailed as a distinctive new voice at a time when there was little representation of Loyalist culture in drama. With productions of his plays winning acclaim around the world, from Europe to the US, his reputation soon became global.

In 1995 Gary became the first person from Northern Ireland to win the Stewart Parker Award, for **Independent Voice**, another radio play. He won the 1998 Irish Times Theatre Award for



'Best New Play' for **In a Little World of Our Own** and, in that year also won the Belfast Drama Award for the same play and **Sinking**. He has also won the Evening Standard Charles Wintour Award for 'Most Promising Playwright', while the short film he wrote and directed, **Suffering**, won 'Best Short Film' at the Belfast Film Festival in 2003. In 1998, he was made writer-in-residence at the Royal National Theatre, London.

Perhaps his best-known work is **As the Beast Sleeps**, which he adapted for television from his own play, and was first shown on the BBC in 2002. A powerful post-ceasefire account of the falling out between two UDA members, it had a huge impact in the UK and Ireland. In 2005, Gary, wife Alison and young son Harry were forced to leave the Rathcoole estate after intimidation, though they still live in Belfast. His experience was reflected in his play, **Remnants of Fear**, which he says, "Is about challenging, introspectively, the trials facing young people in working class Protestant communities." He continues to pick up awards with a Los Angeles production of **Loyal Women** gaining several prestigious awards, including nominations for the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Awards, in 2008.





# harry midgley

LABOUR LEGEND

1892 - 1957

Henry (Harry) Cassidy Midgley was born at 59 Seaview Street on September 8th 1892. It was a small terraced house in an area which suffered from overcrowding and disease, conditions which would greatly influence Harry's future political outlook. Despite the early death of his father Alexander, a shipyard worker, when Harry was seven, he stayed on at Duncairn

Gardens National School until he was twelve years old, the family relying on the meagre income his mother Elizabeth derived from stitching handkerchiefs. At fourteen, Harry began an apprenticeship as a joiner with the North Belfast-based shipbuilders Workman & Clark.

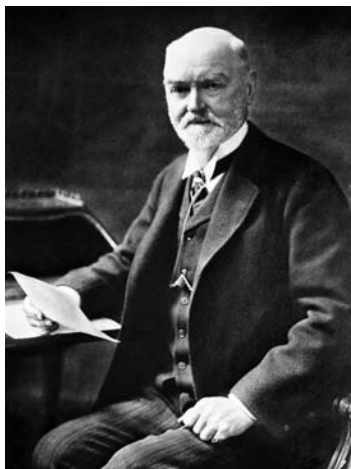
Harry cut his political teeth at the North Belfast branch of the Independent Labour Party (ILP), making his public speaking debut on the steps of Custom House Square at an ILP meeting. His socialist convictions were strengthened by his experiences as a soldier in the First World War, during which he lost his brother Alex. He captured his reflections on the War in a collection of poems, *Thoughts from Flanders*. It was while he was home on leave in 1918 that he married Eleanor Adgey.

On his return from the War he became involved in the Belfast Labour Party. In May 1921 he stood as an independent candidate in East Belfast in elections for the first Northern Ireland Parliament. Though still unsuccessful he fared much

better as a Labour representative in West Belfast in the Westminster elections of 1923 and 1924, winning votes from both Catholics and Protestants.

He became the first Secretary of the Northern Ireland Labour Party (NILP), which grew out of the Belfast Labour Party, in 1924 and, a year later, became a city councillor for Dock in North Belfast. With his influence growing, he became Chairman of the NILP in 1932. In 1933 he finally won a seat in the Northern Ireland Parliament as representative for Dock, again by combining Protestant and Catholic votes. By this point he was living with Eleanor and their four children in Duncairn Gardens in North Belfast. He would lose his seat in 1938, largely as a result of his strong anti-Franco position, which sparked conflict with the Catholic Church and lost him vital Catholic support. However, he returned to Stormont in 1941 after a by-election in East Belfast.

In 1942 Harry was expelled from the NILP over his determination to keep the link with Britain, forming his own party, the Commonwealth Labour Party, with himself as its Chairman. In April 1943, Harry was appointed the new Minister of Public Security and became the first non-Unionist to enter the Northern Ireland Government. In September 1947, however, he resigned from his own party and joined the Unionists. In 1949 he was once again re-elected for the Willowfield Constituency, this time as a Unionist. In 1949 he was appointed Minister for Labour and National Insurance and, the following year, became Minister for Education, staying in the post until his death on April 29th 1957.



# thomas sinclair

COVENANT CREATOR

1838 - 1914

Born in Belfast on September 23rd 1838, the second son of Thomas Sinclair Senior and Sarah Archer, Thomas Sinclair was educated at the Royal Belfast Academical Institution. A remarkably gifted student, he joined Queen's College at the age of fifteen, graduating with a First Class Honours degree in Mathematics and subsequently gaining a Master's degree in Logic, Literature and Political Economy. However, he spurned the lure of academia to enter the family

business, J&T Sinclair, Provender Merchants, which he took over at the death of his father and ran until his own death.

From an influential Presbyterian family, Thomas was closely involved with the Church all his life. His father had contributed to the building of Duncairn Church, while Sinclair Seamen's Church, in Corporation Square, was built, largely with funding from the family, as a memorial to his uncle (and father's business partner) John Sinclair. Thomas himself became Clerk of Session at Duncairn Church at the age of 29.

A great supporter of land reform and an admirer of Gladstone, Thomas became involved in the **Ulster Liberal Party** in the late 1860s, just as the position of the Conservative Party was beginning to weaken. He was also a founder of the **Ulster Reform Club**, which opened in 1885 in Royal Avenue. Like most others in the Ulster Liberal Party, Thomas saw

Gladstone's subsequent intention to introduce Home Rule for Ireland as a betrayal. 'We shall show the world,' he declared in 1886, "that come what may Ulster will never consent to yield up her citizenship, or be expelled from the Imperial Parliament to be degraded to a junior partnership in a subordinate colony".

Thomas's eloquence would continue to play a significant role in the developing Unionist opposition to Home Rule. It was he who conceived the idea for and organised the **Ulster Convention** of 1892, when 12,000 delegates met to pass resolutions outlining the Unionist case against Home Rule. Thomas himself made one of the best speeches, calling for a peaceful and disciplined opposition to Home Rule. The Convention was followed by a huge demonstration in the Botanic Gardens.

Thomas, who continued to play an important role in the ongoing battle against Home Rule, was also the man who wrote the final text for the **Solemn League and Covenant** of 1912. Sir Edward Carson, who led the Unionist opposition to Home Rule at the time, saw no need to "alter a word in the declaration which I consider excellent". It would soon be signed by nearly half-a-million people. Thomas subsequently drafted the constitution of the provisional government of Ulster.

He married twice, to Mary, who died before him and Elizabeth, who survived him. He had four sons and three daughters. He died at his home, Hopefield House on the Antrim Road, in 1914.

Thomas Sinclair is credited with introducing golf to Ulster and was the founder of Royal Belfast Golf Club.

# kate hoey

## SPORTING POLITICIAN

Born into a farming family in the small County Antrim village of Roughfort on June 21st 1946, Kate Hoey was educated at Belfast Royal Academy. She still recalls leaving each morning at 8.20am on the 109 bus from Roughfort, "Getting off at the bus stop by the church and hurrying up the Cliftonville Road to school to reach assembly in time." Later a Northern Ireland High Jump champion, it was at the school that Kate's lifelong passion for sport was kindled. "The school had a very strong sports ethos," she says. "The Physical Education Department was of a high quality and the Headmaster made sport a priority throughout the school, reading out results each day in assembly." Kate retains a great affection both for the school and its environment: "I do feel attached to the Cliftonville Road and that part of the Antrim Road as they are associated with so many happy memories of my school days. My friends were from all walks of life and backgrounds and it was this mix of social classes that was so valuable. To this day I often go back and visit the school and I'm delighted that the old building is still there".

After attending the Ulster College of Physical Education, Kate moved to London where she studied for an economics degree whilst teaching PE part time in London schools. Between 1976 and 1985, she was a senior lecturer at Kingsway College. Her interest in politics saw her becoming active within the **Labour Party** and she took the seat of Vauxhall in South London in a by-election in 1989. She has held it ever since. She became a member of the **Social Security Select Committee** and the **Broadcasting Select Committee** and, following the election of the



Labour Government in 1997, was appointed **Parliamentary Private Secretary** to Frank Field, the Minister for Welfare Reform.

She became a **Home Office Minister** in 1998 and a year later became the UK's first female **Sports Minister**. A passionate follower of many sports, she was an obvious candidate for the post, which she held until 2001. She also worked as an educational advisor for a number of football clubs including Arsenal, Tottenham Hotspur, Queens Park Rangers and Chelsea. As a founder member of the London Northern Ireland Supporters' Club, she took part in a St Patrick's Day parade in London with the then Northern Ireland manager Lawrie Sanchez.

One of the most independently minded MPs in Westminster, Kate has spoken out vociferously on issues such as Europe, the hunting ban, the Iraq War, university tuition and top-up fees and ID cards. She has also taken an interest in human rights issues around the world. In 2003, 2005 and 2006 she went undercover in Zimbabwe to investigate the escalating humanitarian crisis in the country. She is the Chair of the All-Party Zimbabwean parliamentary group.

Self Portrait (1928)  
John Luke 1906-75  
©The Estate of John Luke 2008  
Ulster Museum, Belfast  
Photograph reproduced courtesy of the  
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# john luke

MASTER OF THE MURAL

1906 - 1975

John Luke was born on January 16th 1906 at 4 Lewis Street, near North Queen Street. Father James, a boilerman in a cereal factory, and mother Sarah, the daughter of a Ballymena weaver, presided over a large family of seven sons, of which John was the fourth, and a daughter. The young John went to Hillman Street National School and attended Sunday School classes at Duncairn Gardens Methodist Church around the corner.

His working life started in North Belfast too, at the York Street mill of the York Street Flax Spinning Company. Soon after, he joined shipbuilders Workman, Clark & Co. Working as a 'heater-boy', preparing and carrying hot rivets to the riveters working on the great gantries enveloping the ships' hulls, was dangerous and difficult and John himself fractured a leg in a fall.

John had been developing his sketching talents in tea breaks and following his injury he enrolled in evening classes at the Belfast School of Art in 1923. His progress was so impressive he won a free scholarship for the following year. In 1927 he won the Dunville Art Scholarship of £100 a year, which enabled him to study at the Slade School of Art at the University of London. He graduated in 1930 with a University Diploma in Fine Art, having won the Robert Ross scholarship.

Back in Belfast he gradually began to build up a reputation for his distinctive interpretations of the Northern Ireland landscape, such as McArt's Fort, Cavehill and The Mountains of Mourne. His last painting before the Second World War, Shaw's Bridge, is considered one of his finest. After the war, his remarkably complex technique, which belied the apparent simplicity of his work, would see a growing recognition of his unique talent. Paintings such as his famous *The Three Dancers*, *The Dancer* and *The Bubble and Madonna and Child* showed the new maturity of his craftsmanship. "Here we are faced with craftsmanship on so high a plane that one can do little but gasp," wrote one critic of his work.

He is best remembered for his famous mural in City Hall to commemorate the Festival of Britain in 1951. Painting the tympanum of the inner dome, he worked long days up a 20-ft ladder in the cold winter months, dressed in his heaviest suit, overcoat, muffler and hat. Painted in his usual, rather formalised, style, the 15-ft by 31-ft mural depicts the key elements of Belfast's story, including the shipyards where he himself worked. His fee was £500, increased to £700 on completion. It was highly praised by Queen Elizabeth and is still considered one of the most significant works of its kind in Northern Ireland. He also painted a mural on the theme of Solomon and the building of the Temple at the Provincial Masonic Hall in Rosemary Street. His last years were spent quietly and in relative poverty in a flat in Duncairn Gardens. He died in 1975.





## ciarán hinds

### ACTOR'S ACTOR

One of the finest actors to emerge from Ireland in recent years, Ciarán Hinds has appeared in countless high-profile films and plays, yet has never lost his down-to-earth Belfast personality.

Ciarán was born on February 9th 1953, the fifth child and first son of a doctor and teacher. Growing up in North Belfast, he recalls a happy childhood of "Innocence,

Invention and Imagination". He and his friends made full use of the Waterworks Park on the Cavehill Road, near his house, playing every kind of sport, from "international cricket to Gaelic football via wheelbarrow racing", as well as sailing homemade model yachts on the reservoir or "picking off imagined hordes of Red Indians or Japanese soldiers who were advancing over the brow of the Cavehill Mountain high above us". He has happy memories of Cavehill too. He and his mates could be found there most school holidays, either in the bluebell woods or "on the left nostril of Napoleon's Nose".

Ciarán attended the Holy Family Primary School on Limestone Road, just off the Cavehill Road and later moved to St Malachy's College on the Antrim Road. Good at English, his interest in drama, encouraged by his mother Moya, a fine amateur actress, also blossomed here. By this stage all thought of following his father's career had been forsaken, "I couldn't stand blood and was hopeless at science," Ciarán says now. Perhaps the greatest

influence on his future career, however, was the "remarkable" Patricia Mulholland, who taught Irish dancing in nearby Newington Street. "I went to dancing classes on a Saturday afternoon where they told Irish myths and legends through dancing and mime. It was drama, all body and emotion, and I think that got me into it [acting]", Ciarán says.

After a brief stint studying Law at Queen's, he joined the famous Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) in London. His first theatrical work was with the Glasgow Citizens Company (where he made his debut playing the back end of a horse in *Cinderella!*). He spent most of the next ten years with the company before joining the Paris-based company of the influential theatre director, Peter Brook.

Ciarán's film debut was in John Boorman's acclaimed version of the Arthurian legend, **Excalibur**, in 1981, though he would not appear again on screen until Peter Greenaway's startling **The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover**. Since then this charismatic 'actor's actor' has appeared in many important films, including **Veronica Guerin**, **The Phantom of the Opera**, **Miami Vice**, **Munich**, **Titanic Town**, **Some Mother's Son**, **December Bride**, **Road to Perdition**, **Oscar and Lucinda** and **Circle of Friends**. He has been equally busy in television too with appearances in **Rome**, **The Mayor of Casterbridge**, **Jane Eyre**, **Persuasion**, **Hostages**, and **Prime Suspect Three**. He has also won great acclaim for his theatrical work, not least his stunning performance in Patrick Marber's **Closer** in London and Broadway. His most recent role, in Conor McPherson's **The Seafarer**, has won rave reviews in New York.



# mary ann mccracken

**SOCIAL REFORM PIONEER**

**1770 - 1866**

“This world”, Mary Ann McCracken once wrote, “affords no enjoyment equal to that of promoting the happiness of others.” One of the most remarkable women of her era, social reformer and philanthropist Mary Ann was born on July 8th 1770 in High Street. She inherited her social conscience and radical strain of Presbyterianism from her parents, father Captain John McCracken and mother Ann, who came from one of Belfast’s leading families, the Joys.

Another major influence on her thinking was the school that she attended. Run from a large house in Donegall Street, David Manson’s Academy was, unusually for that time, both co-educational (Manson was insistent that girls received the same extensive education as the boys) and very progressive in its methods.

As a child she made dresses for children in an institution that would play a huge role in her life, the Belfast Poorhouse (now known as Clifton House) run by the Belfast Charitable Society. Designed by Mary Ann’s uncle, Robert Joy (who, with his brother, Henry, edited the Belfast News Letter), the Poorhouse provided greatly needed accommodation and food for the poor of Belfast.

Though slighter in build than her siblings, Mary Ann possessed a formidable strength and determination. Having become adept at

figures at school, she started a small muslin business in Waring Street with her sister Margaret while still in her teens. Even at this age she took a keen interest in social reform and the wider political situation and she became an avid supporter of the United Irishmen, in which her brother Henry Joy McCracken was very influential. Mary Ann shared their belief in equality, social justice and Catholic emancipation and is believed to have fallen in love with another of its leading figures, Thomas Russell, whom she described as “a model of manly beauty”. Sadly, her feelings were not reciprocated and she remained unmarried.

After suffering defeat at the Battle of Antrim in the United Irishmen uprising of 1798, Henry Joy McCracken, the local leader, went on the run. Mary Ann tracked him down and tried to help him escape to America. But he was arrested and hung at the Cornmarket. In vain Mary Ann enlisted the help of a local surgeon to try and revive him. Five years later, she would endure a similar tragedy when Thomas Russell was hanged.

After the death of her brother, Mary Ann raised his four-year-old illegitimate daughter, whom she called Maria, at the family house in Rosemary Lane. After Russell’s death, she turned her attention more and more to social reform and became a leading influence in the Poorhouse, where she was Secretary of the Ladies Committee for fifteen years. As well as fighting for the rights of factory workers, she was a determined advocate for women’s equality and a fierce campaigner against “the diabolical system of slavery” all her days. She died at the age of 96 and is buried in Clifton Street Cemetery.

**“Belfast made me welcome  
when I needed love very badly”**







# mary peters

## GOLDEN GIRL

When Mary Peters dramatically clinched the gold medal in the pentathlon at the 1972 Munich Olympics, it was heralded as Northern Ireland's greatest single sporting triumph. Yet not only was 'Mary P', as she came to be affectionately known, born in the suburbs of Liverpool, there was not a drop of Ulster blood in her family.

That didn't stop the people of her adopted city coming out in their tens of thousands to celebrate her famous victory on her return to Belfast.

Mary's first memory of Belfast was at the age of eleven when she visited her father, an insurance agent, who had been transferred to the city and stayed in a B&B on the Antrim Road opposite Alexandra Park. Soon after, her father gained promotion and the whole family (she also has a brother), moved to his new post in Ballymena.

Sports mad, Mary was highly competitive in whatever event she pursued. The seeds of her athletic success were sown at Portadown College, her family having moved to the County Armagh town. Her headmaster there noticed Mary looking enviously at the boys training for athletics and insisted she be allowed to join them. She never looked back, quickly showing prowess at the pentathlon. Her father created equipment for her to practise on, such as hurdles made of broom handles and

bamboo, and sheer determination, allied to natural talent, saw her come on in leaps and bounds. While still at school, she broke the Northern Ireland all-comers' record for the shot.

In 1958, not long after the tragic early death of her mother, Mary moved to North Belfast, where she taught domestic science. At a difficult emotional time in her life, she recalls the people, "Made me welcome when I needed love very badly." Living on the Antrim Road she swam at the Grove swimming pool and ran in the Waterworks, though she needed to travel to Queen's PEC for more intensive training. She recalls, "Getting the bus from the Antrim Road carrying the starting block and shot put for training at Queen's." After many "happy years" in North Belfast she only left after four British soldiers in the adjoining flat to her were killed in 1976, an event that distressed her greatly.

Inspired by her remarkable coach, 'Buster' McShane, Mary went from strength to strength, gradually becoming one of the leading female athletes in the UK. She captained the British women's team in the Mexico Olympics in 1968, but left without a medal and a sinking feeling she had lost her last chance of one. At Munich, however, she was to gain world fame with a series of personal bests taking her to victory over the world's finest athletes. Coming to the last event, the 200 metres, she knew she had to run the fastest race of her life to clinch gold. She did, just one tenth of a second inside the required time. A BBC Sports Personality of the Year, the City of Belfast Mary Peters Track in Belfast was named after her.

# mulhollands and the linen trade

## CREATING LINENOPOLIS



In the last decades of the 19th century and first of the 20th century Belfast, or 'Linenopolis' as it had become known, was the biggest producer of linen in the world. Probably the first entrepreneurs to see the potential of producing linen, as opposed to cotton, on an industrial scale were the Mulholland family. It was after the largest of their three cotton mills, located in the Point Field near York Street, burned down in 1828, that brothers Thomas, Andrew (pictured) and St Clair, decided to adapt it for spinning flax for linen. Having researched new technology in mills in northern

England, they installed 1,000 flax spindles in the huge new mill as an experiment. This proved so successful that the mill, which became known as the York Street Mill, was rebuilt to spin flax, opening with some 8,000 flax spindles in 1830. By 1856 it had 25,000 spindles and was claimed to be the biggest mill of its kind in the world.

The linen boom had begun, with a host of cotton spinners following their example and other entrepreneurs joining the

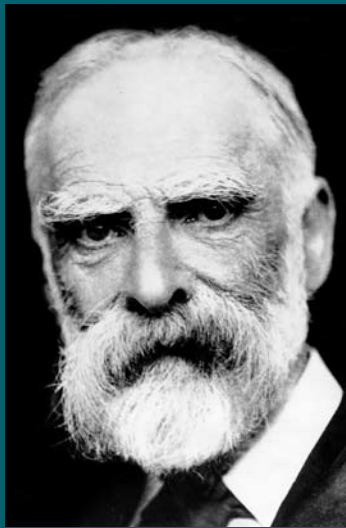
field, including William Ewart, a linen bleacher who built the Crumlin Road Mill. By 1850 only four Belfast mills were devoted to cotton compared to 29 flax spinning mills. The mechanisation of linen production and the emergence of Belfast as the linen capital of Ireland resulted in thousands of people from rural areas seeking employment in the mills and factories of the town, not least around York Street. By 1867, there were 9,000 power looms, increasing business for the manufacturers and ensuring that by 1870 Belfast's place as the dominant force in the world's linen production was confirmed.

Perhaps the best-known Mulholland was Andrew, who was elected Mayor of Belfast in 1845 and who donated the famous Mulholland Organ to the Ulster Hall in 1862. He also built the family home, Ballywalter Park, to which he moved in 1846. The Mulholland business became a limited company in 1864 and was known as the York Street Flax Spinning Company Limited. Its prospectus of the time boasted it was, 'the largest flax mill and linen factory in the North of Ireland, covering about four acres of land'.

As the linen boom continued so employment rose. In the 1920s the York Street Mill employed 5,000 people. But after the Second World War rising costs, new synthetic materials and foreign competition saw a dramatic collapse in the local linen industry. The York Street Mill closed in 1961.



York Street Mill  
©Ulster Folk and Transport Museum



# james bryce

DISTINGUISHED DIPLOMAT

1838 - 1922

One of the most remarkable men of his era, James Bryce was eminent in many fields, including politics, law, academia, diplomacy and history, as well as mountaineering! Born in Arthur Street, Belfast on May 10th 1838, he spent most of his early years at his grandfather's home on the shores of Belfast Lough. After a period in Glasgow, he returned to Belfast at the age of fourteen, where he studied at the

Belfast Royal Academy while staying with his uncle, Reuben Bryce, the school's headmaster. He completed his education at the University of Glasgow and Trinity College Oxford, where he became a Doctor of Civil Law in 1870, and where he wrote an essay on the Holy Roman Empire, which later became an internationally renowned book.

He was called to the Bar in 1867, and from 1870 to 1893 he served as Regius Professor of Civil Law at Oxford. But that was just one facet of his extraordinary career. Passionately committed to the Liberal Party, he became MP for Tower Hamlets in East London in 1880, later representing South Aberdeen for over twenty years. He briefly held the post of Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs under William Gladstone. He also served in Gladstone's last cabinet. A reluctant Home Ruler at the time, he contributed his expertise to the second Home Rule Bill, nevertheless warning Gladstone of the opposition he would

encounter from Liberal Presbyterians in Ulster. He was made Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1905 by Prime Minister Henry Campbell-Bannerman. Never afraid to speak his mind he was an outspoken critic of Britain's treatment of women and children during the Second Boer War, which saw the introduction of concentration camps.

In 1907 he was appointed British Ambassador to the United States, a country of which he was a great admirer. Indeed he had written a well-received book about US political institutions, **The American Commonwealth**, in 1888, which proved to be very influential. He served in this post until 1913, and it is said that his role was crucial in strengthening British relations with the US during an important time. One of the many friends he made during this period was US President Theodore Roosevelt but he was also very popular with the ordinary American public.

Not long after retiring from diplomatic service in 1913, he was awarded the title of Viscount Bryce of Dechmont. He supported the temporary exclusion of Ulster from the terms of the third Home Rule bill while in the House of Lords and became a member of the International Court of Justice at The Hague. Such was his reputation in the US that his report on alleged German atrocities against civilians was used to influence American public opinion to push for involvement in the First World War. He was also a strong advocate for the establishment of an American-backed League of Nations following the war. His final speech in the House of Lords was in support of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of December 1921. He died the following year.

# john cole

POLITICAL PUNDIT

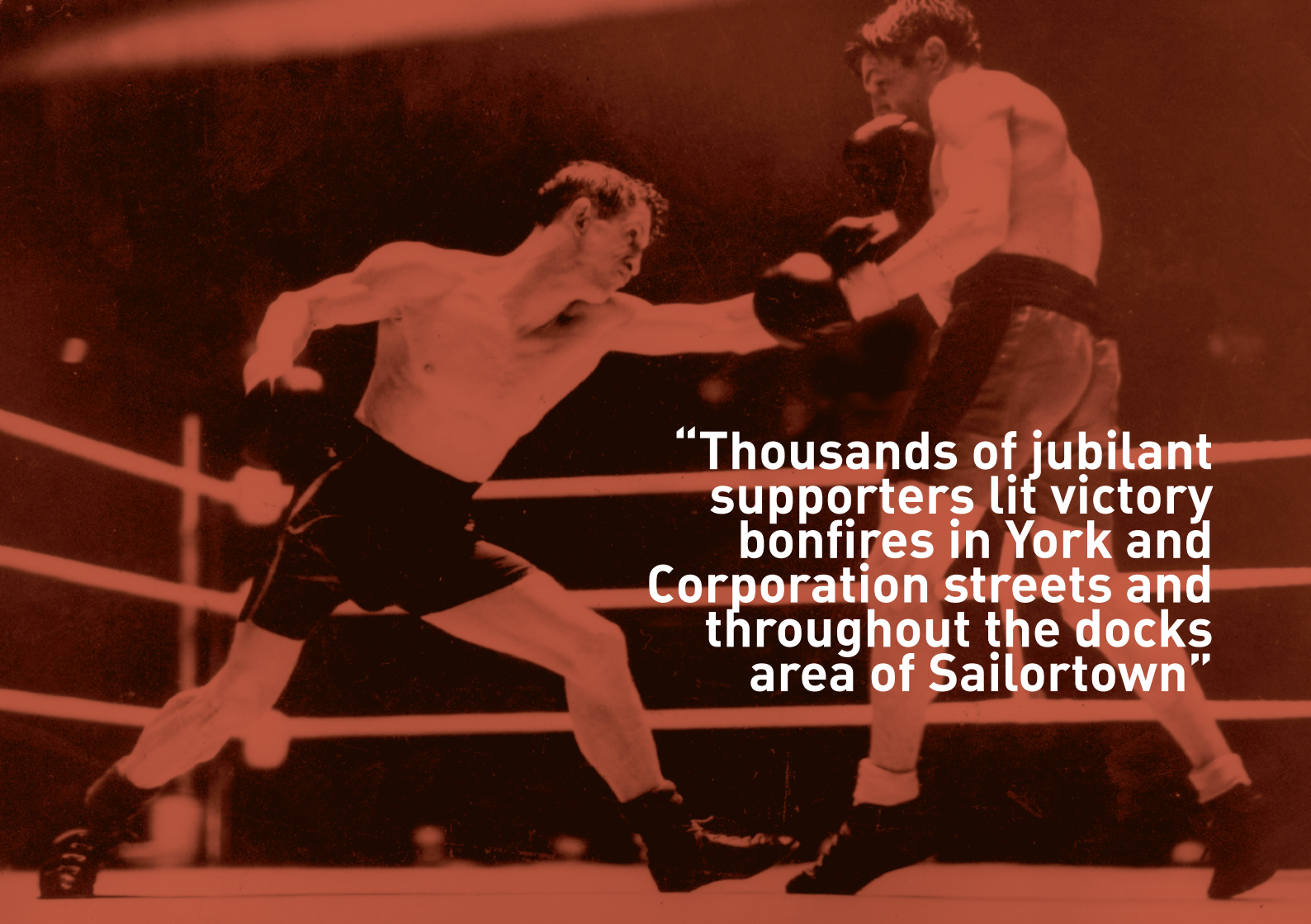
John Cole became a household name on British television while reporting for the BBC during the 1980s, the most turbulent political decade since the war. Born on November 23rd 1927 in North Belfast, the son of an electrician, he attended Fortwilliam and Skegoneil primary schools before moving on to the Belfast Royal Academy, a time of his life he vividly recalls. "I went to Belfast Royal Academy the day after the Second World War began," he says, "and received my Senior Certificate results on the day that the first atomic bomb was dropped on Japan. I was delighted on arrival to discover that the school had a football pitch on the Cliftonville Road site, but only a year or two later the RAF arrived to put a barrage balloon there, and we lost our football pitch. Before then, in the air-raid of Easter Tuesday, 1941, three friends of mine from Skegoneil Primary School had been killed, together with their parents, in Glantane Street. During the war, the Academy understandably closed down evening activities. When the war ended, and I was working at the Belfast Telegraph, I sometimes envied the succeeding generations at the school, being able to be out and about in North Belfast in the evenings".

He spent eleven years at the **Belfast Telegraph**, including spells as political and industrial correspondent. He left Belfast for England in 1956, and had risen to deputy editor by 1970. A spell as deputy editor at the **London Observer** followed, before, in November 1981, he took the job of political editor at the **BBC**. With his distinctive Belfast tones, unique vocal style and trademark Donegal tweed overcoat, John soon became as famous as the politicians he was interviewing, earning the rare



honour of his own puppet on 'Spitting Image' in the process. Despite these appearances on the satirical political comedy series, he was highly respected in Westminster itself, during a period where substance still mattered more than style. Decades of covering politics at the highest level, observing its most significant figures at close quarters, made him the ideal candidate to cover one of the most fascinating periods in British politics since the war. He would report on the remainder of Margaret Thatcher's career, charting her victorious elections, the Falklands War, poll tax riots and the miners' strikes, as well as returning to Belfast to cover the incipient peace process.

He was also at the heart of the maelstrom that was the downfall of Margaret Thatcher herself, his pool of highly placed contacts meaning that he often knew more about the machinations of government than ministers themselves. His dramatic live report from outside Downing Street announcing Thatcher's resignation, was famously interrupted by the return of the Prime Minister herself from Buckingham Palace, where she had relayed the same news to the Queen. His own departure from centre-stage was not long delayed, he retired in October 1992. He has since written four books, including a novel, and continues to observe the political world intently.



**“Thousands of jubilant supporters lit victory bonfires in York and Corporation streets and throughout the docks area of Sailortown”**



# rinty monaghan

CHAMPION OF THE WORLD

1918 - 1984

A proud North Belfast man, John Joseph Monaghan was born in Lancaster Street on August 21st 1918, one of nine children. It was his boundless energy and sense of mischief which caused his grandmother Margaret to name him after the then popular canine film star, Rin-Tin-Tin, a nickname which was eventually shortened to 'Rinty'. His

boxing prowess was evident early on, not least at St Patrick's School in Donegall Street, where he acquired a fearsome reputation for getting into, and winning, fights. It is said he began taking part in street boxing contests at the age of eleven, fighting for fish and chip suppers.

As a youngster Rinty attended the regular boxing shows at the Independent Labour Party (ILP) Hall in nearby York Street, where he had his own first proper bout. After the fight, in what would become a trademark custom, Rinty sang a popular song of the time, Gracie Field's "Sally", to a delighted audience, who rewarded him by throwing an avalanche of pennies into the ring. Managed by the redoubtable Frank McAloran, Rinty began his boxing career with a string of victories, often by knockouts. His irrepressible character and inevitable post-match song earned him a legion of loyal fans and greater success seemed assured. However, he suffered his first defeat in a fight against Glasgow's Jackie Paterson at Glentoran's Oval ground in 1938,

due to over-confidence. To the horror of over 5,000 adoring fans, he was knocked out in the fifth round.

1938 was also the year of his marriage, to local girl Frances Thompson. The couple moved to Little Corporation Street in the docks area of North Belfast, where he would remain for the rest of his life, raising three daughters and a son. During the Second World War Rinty served in the Merchant Navy and the Civil Defence. His talents as a singer also came to the fore when he was enlisted by ENSA to entertain the troops. He returned to boxing after the war, beating Eddie Doran to claim the Ulster flyweight championship in 1945. His great breakthrough came in March 1948, when he knocked out his old rival, Jackie Paterson, at the King's Hall in Belfast, to become the undisputed British, Commonwealth and World flyweight champion. Thousands of jubilant supporters lit victory bonfires in York and Corporation streets and throughout the docks area of Sailortown. A year later Rinty added the European flyweight title to his collection when he defeated French boxer, Maurice Sandeyron.

In 1949, ill health forced him to retire, as undefeated world flyweight champion. Rinty took on various jobs after retirement, including a spell as a singer with a band. He remained a hugely popular figure within the community he was proud to call his own. After his death from lung cancer in 1984, the Belfast Telegraph described Rinty as not just a boxer and showman but 'an institution.' On May 2nd 2007 a blue plaque was unveiled outside the King's Hall to Belfast's undefeated world flyweight champion.

# francis fowke

ARCHITECT AND ENGINEER

1823 - 1865

The eldest of John (a soldier) and Jane Fowke's eight children, Francis Fowke was born in Ballysillan, beneath the Belfast Hills, on July 7th 1823 and was baptised at St Anne's Parish Church. He studied at Dungannon in County Tyrone, before entering the Royal Military College in Woolwich, London. In 1842 he obtained a commission in the Royal Engineers and was posted to Bermuda, where he made an early impression by creating innovative devices to help in the rigging of ships.

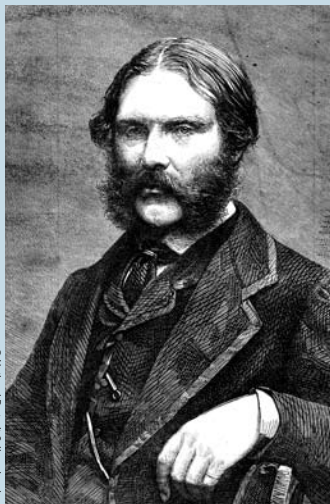
He returned to England, and was stationed in Devon on the south coast. Here he carried out his first architectural commission, the acclaimed Raglan Barracks. In May 1845 he married Louisa Rede, with whom he would have five children.

Not content with his architectural work his creative mind was constantly busy on new inventions. Over the years these included a portable military fire engine which saw service in the British Army, a collapsing photographic camera (the 'bellows') which he patented, a specially designed umbrella, a portable bath and a machine which allowed the simultaneous lighting of a large number of gas lamps. For a short period he worked in Paris, becoming Secretary to the British Commissioner for the Paris Exhibition of 1855, which was intended to be a rival to

London's Great Exhibition of 1851, for which he was nominated to the Legion of Honour.

Returning to England he was appointed as architect and engineer for several important government buildings, beginning with an art gallery in South Kensington. His work impressed many in government, including Disraeli, whom he met while the latter was Chancellor of the Exchequer. After designing what became the Prince Consort's Library at Aldershot on behalf of Prince Albert, he received a box of instruments from the Prince, with the inscription: 'Captain Francis Fowke, Royal Engineers, as a token of regard from Albert, 1859'.

Among his major achievements are the interior of the National Gallery in Dublin and the Museum of Science and Art in Edinburgh. His premature death prevented him completing two of his most important commissions but both the Natural History Museum and the Royal Albert Hall owe much to his original designs. Francis, who had designed the 1862 International Exhibition building in South Kensington, now won a design competition to build a new museum on the same site. After his death Alfred Waterhouse took over, altering the original design from Renaissance to German Romanesque. Francis's finest work, the general design for the Royal Albert Hall, was completed after his death by Major General Henry Scott, another Royal Engineer officer. Francis died in South Kensington on December 4th 1865 after suffering a burst blood vessel. There is a bust of him on permanent display in the Natural History Museum.



© National Portrait Gallery, London





Sky News

# eamonn holmes

## CELEBRITY CHARMER

The longest serving breakfast television anchorman in the United Kingdom, it seems fitting that Eamonn Holmes was named after the famous Irish broadcaster Eamonn Andrews. Born on December 3rd 1959 at Belfast's Mater Hospital, he was the second of Leonard and Josie Holmes' five boys.

Home for the first eight years of Eamonn's life was 161 New Lodge Road, a red-bricked terraced house. It was an environment he recalls with great affection, with neighbours stopping for chats outside, as his house-proud mother scrubbed the pavement clean. It was a typical North Belfast upbringing of the time. With no bathroom in the house, Eamonn remembers being bathed in the living room and though the house didn't have a garden the boys and their friends compensated by playing on the nearby streets and on an old Second World War bombsite.

His first school was the Holy Family Primary School in Newington Avenue and he has warm memories of holding on to his Granny Fitzsimmons' hands, as she collected him in the afternoon and took him to feed the swans and ducks in Alexandra Park. Having passed his 11-Plus, he followed his elder brother Leonard to St Malachy's College, which meant a considerable yearly outlay for his hard pressed parents to find. By now Leonard Holmes had gone into the carpet fitting business on his own, and the brothers were expected to help out in the holidays, though Eamonn recalls being "not just bad but useless" at carpet laying.

The high academic standards demanded by St Malachy's created a tough challenge, but with the single exception of maths, in which he proudly gained an unclassified grade at O-Level, he graduated with distinction. He had already decided that his future career lay in television journalism, having observed at close quarters the teams of news reporters and documentary makers from around the world now virtually resident in Belfast during the Troubles. After training in journalism at the College of Business Studies, he spent two important years on **Ulster Television's farming programme.**

His big break nearly didn't happen. He initially turned the job down because he thought the offered rate of £44.44 was weekly, not daily. But with the persuasive charm that would characterise his career, he talked his way back into the job and his television career was on its way. He progressed in the sports department, where he learnt under the tutelage of Jackie Fullerton, with his great opportunity coming during Northern Ireland's highly successful 1982 World Cup, when he presented a nightly sports report on **Good Evening Ulster** with Gloria Hunniford.

But fame would truly beckon for Eamonn in London, where he helped launch breakfast television channel, **GMTV** in 1993, as a presenter, a position he held for 13 years, before moving to **Sky**. His relaxed, humorous style and laid back Belfast charm proved a big hit with visiting celebrities and viewers alike, though a notorious interview with a monosyllabic illusionist David Blaine will never be forgotten. He also hosts top-rating television quiz shows and radio shows. Now a father of four, he divides his time between Belfast, where he lives, and London.



**“The most important influence on me was the idea that you made your own entertainment”**



©Andrew McPherson

# kenneth branagh

## NATURAL STORYTELLER

Kenneth was born on December 10th 1960, to parents, William Branagh and Frances Harper, who were themselves born and raised in North Belfast. Living in a small terraced house in Mountcollyer Street, Kenneth went to Grove Park Primary School. He looks back with great affection on his childhood. "You felt in the middle of things in North

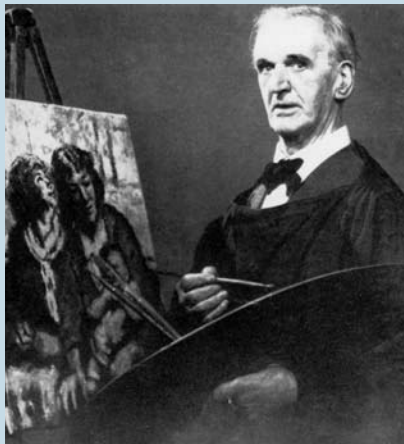
Belfast," he says. "It felt like a village. In those pre-Troubles times there was a strong sense of place and community, you knew the territory almost from birth, the parks and streets, you felt you couldn't get lost. It was a tightly knit community too, a rich tapestry of people. Everyone knew each other and looked after each other".

His abiding memory is of a city "full of parks", with his favourite being the adjacent Alexandra Park, which he would cross going to and from school. "I loved being so close to the countryside, Cave Hill was like Everest to me then. I also loved going to the Zoo or walking to the old Capitol cinema to see the latest James Bond or Beatles' film." Kenneth absorbed the folklore, culture and stories of North Belfast at regular get-togethers of his extended family. "The most important influence on me," he says, "was the idea that you made your own entertainment. I remember listening to so many people who were natural storytellers who could hold the attention. They all had different

styles, so I had access to a fund of rich and colourful yarns." He recalls being inspired by a trip to the Grove Theatre to see famed Ulster actor Joseph Tomelty in a production of Dickens' **A Christmas Carol**.

The family moved to Reading in England in 1970 and at the age of 18 he enrolled at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA) in London, and had been chosen for the title role in the first of Graham Reid's **Billy Plays** for the BBC before he had left. The three televised plays, produced between 1982 and 1984, based on a dysfunctional Belfast family, were an early pointer to a remarkable talent. After RADA he joined the famous Royal Shakespeare Company, where starring roles in **Henry V** and **Romeo and Juliet** earned him praise from critics, who likened him to a young Laurence Olivier.

He formed his own theatrical company, Renaissance, in 1987 and directed and starred in a film version of *Henry V*, which won him Best Actor and Best Director Oscar nominations. Over the years he has written, directed and starred in numerous high-profile films ranging from Shakespearian adaptations such as **Much Ado About Nothing**, **Hamlet**, which won him a Best Adapted Screenplay Oscar nomination, and **Othello** to roles in **Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets** and **Rabbit Proof Fence**. His latest film as a director is a remake of **Sleuth** (2007). He has never lost his love of theatre though, from his youthful performance alongside Rupert Everett in the multi-award-winning **Another Country** to recent productions of Shakespeare and Chekhov.



# william conor

PAINTER OF THE PEOPLE

1881 - 1968

One of the most talented artists ever to emerge from Ulster, William Conor (he was born William Conor but changed the spelling later) was born in Fortingale Street in the Old Lodge district of North Belfast in 1881. His father was a

tinsmith and William grew up in one of the closely-knit working class communities he would later portray with such warmth and brilliance. He attended the Clifton Park Central National School. His abilities as an artist were first noticed at the age of ten when a music teacher was impressed by his chalk drawings and arranged for him to attend the Belfast Government School of Design in College Square North in 1894.

In 1904 William became an apprentice lithographer at the prestigious company of David Allen and Sons, designing posters. It became obvious that he was destined for greater artistic heights though and he left to concentrate on his painting. By 1910 he was an exhibiting member of the Belfast Art Society and beginning to win admirers to his work. His portrayal of Belfast working class life would become an abiding commitment with him. "My aim has been to seek for beauty in those places where it is not often sought," he wrote later, "in crowded thoroughfares, in the factory and in the shipyard".

One of his 1914 paintings, *Studio Dance*, portrays a young man playing an accordion which may well be a self-portrait (though

he was said to be tone deaf). During the First World War he was appointed Official War Artist, and visited army camps and munitions works for his sketches.

Following the war William went to London where he became friendly with another famous artist with North Belfast roots, John Lavery, who was then living in Kensington. He also came to know Augustus John, whom he once criticised on the grounds that one of his paintings wasn't Presbyterian enough! He was, by this time, an established artist, generally considered to belong to the post-impressionist group. His technique of using a razor blade to scrape the oil crayon gave his paintings a truly distinctive personality.

By 1921, his new status was recognised when he was commissioned to paint the official opening of the Northern Ireland Parliament, which took place in Belfast City Hall (it didn't move to Stormont until 1932). During the Second World War he was commissioned to record Northern Ireland's contribution to the war.

Various honours followed for this rather shy and modest man, including becoming the first Irish artist to become a member of the Royal Institute of Oil Painters. He was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1952 and became President of the Royal Ulster Academy in 1957. More than fifty of his works are held in the Ulster Museum collection.

He died following complications after a fall at his home in Salisbury Road in North Belfast in 1968. His gallery from the years 1944 to 1950 at 11a Stranmillis Road is now the Café Conor.



# tim mcgarry

## HOLE IN THE WALL GANG COMIC

Whether it's as the opinionated black taxi driver at the end of BBC's **Hearts and Minds** or the Sinn Fein stalwart 'Da' in the much loved BBC series **Give My Head Peace**, few Northern Ireland comedians are as instantly recognisable as Tim McGarry. Born at the Mater Hospital, on June 23rd 1964, one of seven children (a sister, Claire, died before he was born) of a surgeon and nurse, Tim has remained a North Belfast man

all his life, currently living just around the corner from where he grew up. "It was a large Victorian house on the corner of Fortwilliam Park and Somerton Road," he recalls, "though sadly it has since been knocked down. We were very lucky, it was a great house with a huge garden to play in".

He also has happy memories of both schools he attended, Our Lady of Lourdes off the Antrim Road, followed by St Malachy's. There were few signs though of his future path at this stage. "I suppose you could say I was one of a number of class comedians' he laughs, 'but I didn't stand out. It was a talented year though, with people like (screenwriter) Brendan Foley and (novelist) Robert McLiam Wilson." Though not an enthusiastic soccer player himself, he inherited a family allegiance to

Cliftonville Football Club. "My uncle Kevin played for them and was President for many years and my father was club doctor. To be honest they were pretty awful when I started supporting them but had a good spell towards the end of the seventies. I've started going again and taking my son Joseph (who was born in 1998)".

Having grown up during the Troubles, his most frightening experience was when the family home was set on fire in February 1981. "Because it was an old house, the walls were thick and that helped stem the fire but the smoke was so bad my sister nearly died. They had cut the phone lines so my father couldn't call the Fire Brigade but luckily a cousin across the road saw the fire and rang them. My father broke his ankle jumping out of a window".

It was while at Queen's University, studying Law, that the seeds of his future success were sown. There he met his **Hole in the Wall Gang** colleagues, Damon Quinn and Michael McDowell. "Damon had already written plays and sketches and we'd act them out. We'd do shows for charity which went down very well and it grew from there." The Hole in the Wall Gang were picked up by Radio Ulster and won the UK Sony Award for Best Comedy in 1992. The first television episode of Give My Head Peace was in 1995 and it ran until December 28th 2008. Tim also appears in their latest series, **Dry Your Eyes** playing the abusive Arthur Heckler. He still retains a great affection for North Belfast, "It's a very pleasant place to live and the craic is great. I've even managed to lure my wife over from West Belfast," he says.



# frank carson

COMIC WHO TELLS 'EM HIS WAY

Few comedians have been able to match the rapid and unrelenting delivery of Hugh Francis (Frank) Carson, and, in truth, it really is the way he tells them. Frank was born at 29 Great Georges Street on November 6th 1926 and baptised at St Patrick's Church, next door to St Patrick's Primary School, which he would later attend.

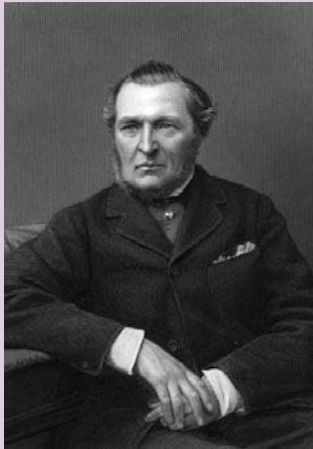
His father John was a Belfast man, his mother Josphine Vittoria Augusta was a Dubliner of Italian extraction. He had three brothers, Pat, Jim and John, and a sister, Josephine, who died as a baby. They subsequently lived in Little Patrick Street, known as 'Little Italy' and also in Corporation Street, where Frank recalls seeing champion boxer Rinty Monaghan, who lived around the corner. Living in Catholic areas, Frank was always wary of straying into Protestant streets, "for fear of getting a hiding", but when he joined the Belfast Newsboys Club at the age of ten, he found it was mixed. "Those boys who had terrified me ended up being friends for life," he said. It was here that he learnt the art of comedy, blacking up as a minstrel boy and telling jokes. It was after writing a satire on travelogues for the club much later on that his comedy career truly began.

After leaving school at fourteen he worked as an apprentice electrician during the Second World War and recalls, "Cutting a

cable as I dug through rubble after the Blitz and blacking out half of Belfast." Later he worked as a plasterer and spent three-and-a-half years in the Parachute Regiment during the war.

His big breakthrough as a comedian came after appearing on Hughie Green's popular ITV talent show, **Opportunity Knocks** in the seventies but it was on **The Comedians**, Granada TV's vehicle for the major comic talent of the day, that he really made his name, Frank's style proving perfect for the show's demanding stand-up comedy format. With his large personality, barrage of one-liners and unlikely stories, he quickly became one of the best-known entertainers in the United Kingdom. His two catchphrases, "It's a cracker" and "It's the way I tell 'em", were repeated throughout the country and Frank found himself heading top variety shows and selling out record-breaking tours. He has maintained his status as a nationally loved comedian ever since. He has also appeared as an actor in several television series. It is said that the only time in his life he has been lost for words was when he was told he was the subject of 'This is Your Life'!

In 1973 he married his wife Ruth, with whom he has three children. Today, living in the north of England, he continues to appear on the live circuit and in pantomime and often returns to Belfast. In 1987 (Count) Frank Carson was knighted by Pope John Paul II into the Order of St Gregory. At 17 minutes his private audience with the Pope was six minutes longer than President Reagan's but, unusually, he only had time for one joke.



# hugh mcalmont cairns

YOUNGEST LORD CHANCELLOR

One of the most eloquent parliamentary orators of the 19th century, and British Lord Chancellor for several years, Hugh McCalmont Cairns was educated at Belfast Royal Academy (when it was located in what is now Academy Street), which has named one of its four houses after him. From an old Scottish family, one of whom had settled in Ulster during the reign of James 1st, he himself was born at Cultra on December 27th 1819.

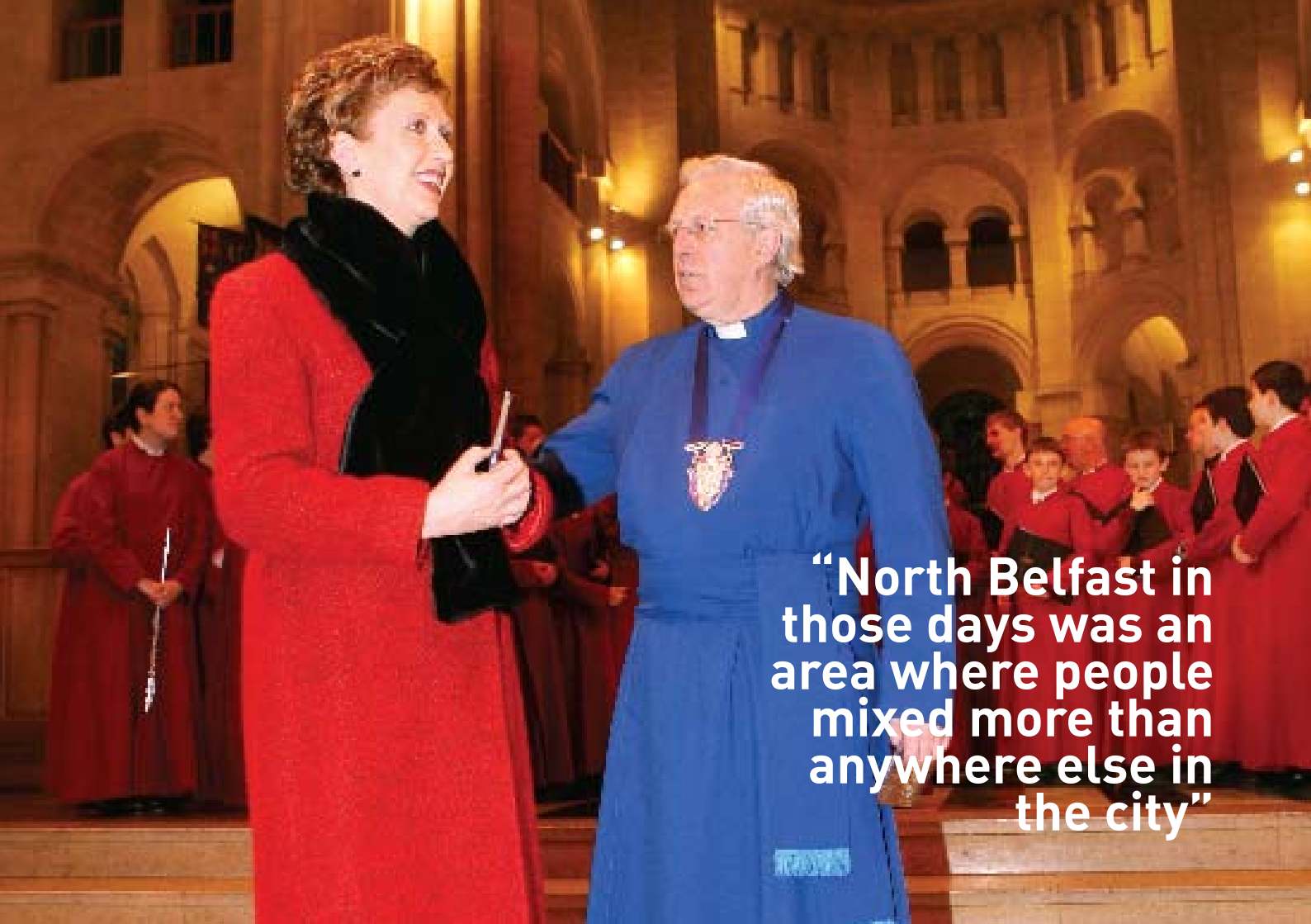
By the age of eighteen he had obtained a First in Classics from Trinity College Dublin and, in his twenties, studied for the Bar in London, becoming a successful barrister. His legal background and incisive mind would prove of great benefit as he turned to a parliamentary career, becoming member for Belfast in 1852. Around this time he married Mary, eldest daughter of John McNeile of Parkmount, North Belfast, with whom he had five sons and two daughters. In 1856 he became a Queen's Counsel and two years later Conservative Prime Minister Lord Derby appointed him Solicitor General. He was knighted soon after.

His political career, he was a confirmed Conservative, was marked by a series of brilliant speeches, one of which, regarding the Irish Land Bill, being described by Disraeli as, "one of the greatest speeches ever delivered in Parliament". In June 1866, with Lord Derby briefly back as Prime Minister, he was made

Attorney General. Within a year he was made Lord Justice of Appeal and, in 1878, he was created Viscount Garmoyle and Earl Cairns.

A deeply religious man, who placed his belief before all other considerations, he was a fervent champion of the Protestant faith and argued forcefully against the proposed disestablishment of the Church of Ireland (which eventually became law in 1871). In 1868 Disraeli, who had succeeded Lord Derby made him Lord Chancellor, the youngest of the 19th century (and probably the only one to continue to teach Sunday School!). During the next year ill health forced him to resign as leader of the Conservative Party in the Lords. When Disraeli formed his next administration, in 1874, he again appointed Lord Cairns as Lord Chancellor, a post he retained until 1880. After the death of Disraeli the following year, many Conservatives thought he might be the most suitable candidate to succeed him as leader of the party. However, by this time his health was showing signs of deterioration and his political career was at an end.

His religious beliefs were also reflected in his support for missionary work, and he was a close associate of the social reformer Lord Shaftesbury. A strong supporter of the work of Dr Barnardo, he opened his first girls' home at Barkingside in Essex in July 1876. Today, Cairns House still stands on the one remaining green in Barkingside. At his death in 1885 tributes poured in from all sides. Many reflected on his remarkable skills in political debate with a typical contribution writing of the, "inestimable value of his calm, judicial mind even on the most burning questions".



**“North Belfast in those days was an area where people mixed more than anywhere else in the city”**





# mary mcaleese

## IRISH PRESIDENT

The first President of the Republic of Ireland to come from Northern Ireland, Mary McAleese grew up in the Ardoyne area of North Belfast. Mary Patricia Leneghan was born at Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital on June 27th 1951, the eldest of Paddy and Claire Leneghan's nine children. The Ardoyne then was a mixed community, largely living in two-up, two-down terraced houses. Mary herself would later describe the friendly environment as like being "in a cocoon".

Mary spent her primary school years at the Convent of the Sisters of Mercy, just down the road from the house in Balholme Drive where she was born. But with a growing family, Paddy, who graduated from bar manager to bar owner during their time in the area, and Claire, moved to a larger house in Mountainview Gardens near the old fire brigade station. Though they were the first Catholic family in the street, the young Mary, who loved Camogie and Irish dancing, made many friends. "She would be playing in their houses and they in ours," Paddy recalls now. "North Belfast in those days was an area where people mixed more than anywhere else in the city." Mary also enjoyed family outings to Woodvale Park and Belfast Zoo.

After passing her Eleven Plus Mary went to St Dominic's High School on the Falls Road. A diligent student who excelled academically, she was also known for her independent thinking,

a factor that would prove a major influence in her subsequent career, particularly in the areas of women's rights and equality. In 1969, she became one of only eleven women to be accepted to study Law at Queen's University. Mary first met her future husband, accountant and dentist Martin McAleese, when the two competed against each for their school debating teams. They were married in 1976 and have three children.

With the onset of the Troubles in the late sixties, life in the Ardoyne became increasingly hazardous for the family, including attacks on two of Mary's siblings. Matters came to a head when their house was riddled with 58 bullets from a machine gun fired from the vacant house across the road. Fortunately, the family had made a last minute decision to stay elsewhere that night. Paddy and Claire decided to move their family out of North Belfast, initially to West Belfast and subsequently to Rostrevor in County Down.

Graduating in Law from Queen's University in 1973, a year later Mary became one of the few women to be called to the Northern Ireland Bar, moving to Dublin in 1975 to become Reid Professor of Criminal Law, Criminology and Penology at Trinity College. In 1994, she became the first female Pro-Vice Chancellor of Queen's University. Over the years she also worked as a current affairs journalist and television and radio presenter. She also served as **Director of Channel Four television**. The highlight of her career, however, was her inauguration as the eighth **President of Ireland** on November 11th 1997. She was re-elected in 2004 for another seven-year spell.



British Broadcasting Company concert party, outside the studio in Linenhall Street, Belfast in 1925. Richard Hayward sitting centre with bow tie  
Photograph ©National Museums Northern Ireland 2008  
Ulster Museum, Belfast  
Photograph reproduced courtesy of the  
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# richard hayward

ULSTER'S FATHER OF FILM

1892 - 1964

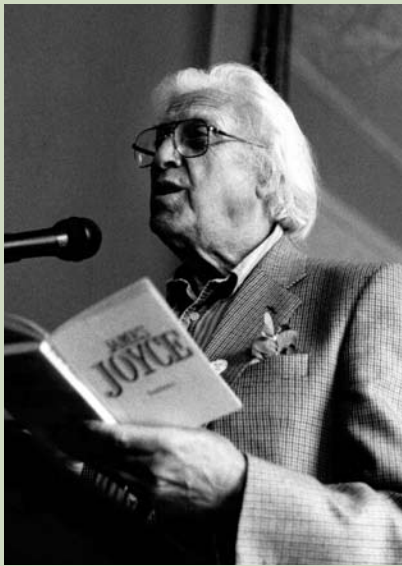
Richard Hayward, the man who might be described as the 'father of Northern Ireland's film industry' had a passionate desire to articulate the true Ulster identity, an ambition he strove to achieve in a wide variety of fields, from prose, song and poetry, to drama, radio and film.

Born in 1892, Richard published his first collection of poems in 1917, and developed both as writer and actor over the next decade. During the 1920s, he wrote and acted for the famous Ulster Theatre Players, who put on a production of his first play *Huge Love* at the Grand Opera House in 1924. He was also a founder member of the Belfast Radio Players, writing a series of comedy sketches in Ulster dialogue for radio.

In the early 1930s he and fellow actor JR Mageean formed the Belfast Repertory Theatre, which was based at the Empire Theatre. Their most important productions were by former shipyard worker Thomas Carmduff, whose *Workers*, about shipyard workers, with Richard in the main role, was a huge hit in Belfast and Dublin in 1932. Richard now believed he had created as "vital a force in the dramatic life of Northern Ireland as is the Abbey Theatre in the South".

His great aim in all his work was to forge a distinctive Northern identity, "To make Ulster better known and better understood and appreciated". He attempted this using dialect, folksong and, in his films, rural Northern Ireland settings. He wrote poems in the Ulster dialect and recorded records of local folk songs he had collected. He also wrote travel books. Though he blamed the picture house or 'Kinema' for the decline of the ballad singer, whose role it had previously been to record the great events of the day, he was not slow in seeing the potential of the increasingly influential art form and its potential for capturing a distinct Northern Irish identity. A member of the Orange Order and committed Unionist, he nonetheless saw Ulsterman as 'fiercely Irish' albeit "a separate kind of Irishman".

He is perhaps best known though for starring in and helping to create the first films of the fledgling Northern Ireland film industry. The first, *The Luck of the Irish*, shot partly in Northern Ireland, was promoted as 'Ulster's first feature film' when it premiered on December 13th 1935 before the great and good of Northern Ireland. It was a popular success at home and abroad and Richard hoped it might spawn a vibrant local film industry. His next film was *Early Bird* (1936), followed by *Irish and Proud of it* (1938) and *Devil's Rock* (1938), which he also wrote and which was shot entirely on location in the Glens of Antrim. He also co-produced the film *Back Home in Ireland* inspired by the presence of US troops in Northern Ireland during the war, during which he leads an American through points of interest in Northern Ireland. Richard Hayward died in Belfast in a car accident on October 13th 1964.



# sam mcaughtry

**BARD OF BELFAST**

An acclaimed novelist and broadcaster, Sam was the first person from Northern Ireland to be elected a member of the Irish Senate. It was a long way from his impoverished upbringing in the Tiger's Bay area of North Belfast. One of ten children, though only six would survive, Sam was raised in a tiny two-up, two-down terraced house in Cosgrave

Street. His father, a seaman with the Ulster Steamship Company, was often away and Sam has vivid memories of him returning home from sea, steps echoing on the cobbled streets, producing silver coins for his welcoming children.

Despite his mother Lizzie's problems in rearing six children on her own, they were a close family, and he became fiercely attached to his elder brother Mart (Marriott), his protector and closest friend. Eventually, as his elder brothers found employment, life became easier but Sam has vivid memories of the shame of the trips to the pawnshops. He vividly recalls taking prized items wrapped in newspaper to Ernie's on the New Lodge Road, praying for his mother's sake that no one would see him. Despite ability in English he didn't thrive at school (he later took English and Maths at technical college). He has happier memories accompanying Mart on his first job, exercising greyhounds on Cave Hill, and watching

his brother, an accomplished footballer, playing on the Grove playing fields before large crowds. He remembers crying when Mart joined their father as a seaman on the Dunaff Head ship.

In 1935, with the extra income from the elder boys, the family moved to a bigger house in Hillman Street, which had the added luxury of a bathroom. Sam left school at fifteen, with little sign of his future career in evidence, and spent over two years at a drapery warehouse before an equally inglorious spell as a riveter at Short and Harland's aircraft factory. He joined the RAF in 1940. But tragedy would soon hit the family, when Mart was killed when his ship, the Kenbane Head, was sunk by the German battleship, the Admiral Scheer, on November 5th 1940 during the Battle of the Atlantic.

By his own admission, Sam faced a difficult task in rebuilding his life after a long battle with alcoholism but, ironically, the cathartic retelling of his childhood and loss of his brother, **The Sinking of the Kenbane Head**, helped establish him as one of Northern Ireland's finest writers and storytellers. He became a well-known columnist for the Irish Times, appeared regularly on both BBC and RTE, and wrote short stories, novels and a further memoir, **On the Outside Looking in**. A committed trade unionist, he played a key role in the IWU, NIPSA and the NUJ. He was Chairman of the Peace Train Organisation, which he helped found during the Troubles and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the National University of Ireland in 1998 for his contribution to literature and peace. He was elected to Seanad Eireann (the Irish Senate) in 1996.



Henry Joy McCracken 1767-98 (1926)  
Sarah Cecilia Harrison 1842-1941  
©Unknown  
Ulster Museum, Belfast  
Photograph reproduced courtesy of the  
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# henry joy mccracken

UNITED IRISHMAN

1767 - 1798

Most famous of the Northern leaders of the United Irishmen rebellion of 1798, Henry Joy was born in High Street in 1767. He came from a close family with a strong Presbyterian faith, and, on his mother's side especially, a distinctly radical strain. His mother, Ann, was the third child of Francis Joy who started the Belfast Newsletter, which was later run by Ann's brothers Henry and Robert. His father, Captain John McCracken, was a ship owner, who also started rope making, canvas and sail making businesses.

The Belfast of this time was still just a small town of some 13,000 people and was heavily influenced by the largely Presbyterian merchants who dominated its society. Many of the radical political ideas of the time, spreading from France and America, were enthusiastically discussed, not least in the McCracken family. Known as 'Harry' by the family, Henry Joy grew to be a handsome and intelligent man of over six foot, with an abiding interest in politics and social justice.

At the age of seventeen he began work in a cotton mill. He started the first Sunday School in Belfast with his younger sister, Mary Ann (who would become a famous advocate of social reform), in which reading and writing skills were taught to all. Ideals of equality and liberty inspired him and, like many Presbyterians of his time, he argued for Catholic emancipation. When the radical Dublin lawyer, Wolfe Tone visited Belfast in October 1791, he met not only his friend Thomas Russell, who had become close to the McCracken family but also Henry Joy.

Though there is no evidence to support the claim, Mary Ann believes her brother was one of those attending when the Society of United Irishmen was founded, supposedly in Peggy Barclay's tavern in Sugarhouse Entry.

Like all the McCracken's, Henry Joy loved music and was involved in organising a famous festival for Irish harpers in the beautiful Assembly Rooms over the Exchange Building in Waring Street. It was a great success, helping a revival in harp music in Ireland. After a bill introduced in the Irish Parliament, enabling full Catholic emancipation, was rejected in 1795, revolution became more likely than reform. Soon after, on McArt's Fort on Cave Hill, high above Belfast, Henry Joy and Thomas Russell were among a few United Irishmen to join Tone in a momentous oath, "Never to desist in our efforts, until we had subverted the authority of England over our country and asserted her independence".

The rising itself came in 1798 and on 6th June, McCracken issued a proclamation calling for the 'United Army of Ulster' to rise. However, the rise was a disaster and McCracken, the Northern leader, was defeated at the Battle of Antrim. After hiding in countryside outside Belfast, he was captured and tried at the Assembly Rooms, where the Harp Festival was held. He left behind an illegitimate daughter who was raised by Mary Ann. Though he was buried in the grounds of St George's Church in High Street, remains believed to be his were later placed in Mary Ann's grave at the Clifton Street Cemetery.



# buck alec

HARDMAN OF NORTH BELFAST

1902 - 1995

Belfast has spawned many extraordinary characters over the centuries, but few could compete with the notorious 'Buck Alec'. Having become part of the fabric of Belfast legend, it is difficult to accurately establish the details of his life, but it is believed that Alexander Robinson was born in 1902 and he certainly lived most of his life around York Street, near the docks area of Sailortown.

Though not a big man, Buck became a formidable boxer and was feared both in the ring and in the numerous street (and pub) fights for which he became famous. A man who 'bucked' the law, his first recorded arrest was at the age of eleven, and it was from this time that his famous nickname was acquired.

During the 1920s he joined the reserve police force known as the A1 Ulster Special Constabulary or the A Specials, and was involved in the Troubles of that period. His legitimate boxing career was also flourishing at this time. At the age of 20 he won a bout at the King's Hall and went on to become middleweight champion of Ireland in 1927. For several years Buck Alec disappeared from the docks area, and is thought to have spent time in America, during the Prohibition era, and Canada.

The Belfast writer Sam McAughtry recalls seeing a huge banner across York Street on his return, 'Welcome Home Buck Alec'.

Buck Alec himself told the North Belfast playwright Martin Lynch that he worked for President Kennedy's father Joseph while in America, and his family have confirmed that he also worked for the famous Chicago gangster Al Capone, whom he came to know well.

Buck Alec became famous throughout Belfast during the 1940s and 1950s for his distinctive choice of pets. Over that period he kept three lions, Roger, Sheila and Joey, two of whom he obtained from Dublin Zoo and one from Belfast Zoo. Contrary to Belfast folklore, it is unlikely that he took the lions for walks amidst terrified locals, as has been generally reported. However, the lions did achieve considerable fame as Buck Alec staged many elaborate and popular shows at circuses throughout Ireland in which the lions participated, often accompanied by a large and costumed cast. Most memorable was his famous vanishing lion act, in partnership with "The Great Benyon", in which they would somehow make the lion disappear before the startled audience. Nobody, it seems, ever discovered how this was achieved.

Until fairly late in life Buck Alec was renowned as the hardman of North Belfast, often taking on much younger and fitter challengers to his crown. Nor was he too fussy about whom he fought. Flautist James Galway, who grew up in North Belfast, recalls being told by a retired policeman of how he arrested Buck Alec after being thrown through the window of a local pub. Despite his extraordinary life Buck Alec lived to a great age, and died in 1995.

**“His family have confirmed that he also worked for the famous Chicago gangster Al Capone, whom he came to know well”**



# sir otto jaffe

JEWISH LORD MAYOR

1846 - 1929



Belfast's only Jewish Lord Mayor was actually born in Hamburg, on August 13th 1846, but he left a lasting legacy on his adopted city. His father, Daniel, who had business interests in Europe and America had started a linen exporting firm business in Belfast in 1845 and also helped found what would become a thriving Jewish community. Otto came to Belfast when he was twelve and went to school in Holywood. A few years later

he left for New York to work in his father's businesses there. It was on his return, in 1877, that he took charge of the family linen firm, which he gradually turned into one of Belfast's largest industries. In 1879 he married Paula Hertz and they had two sons, Arthur, born in 1880, and William, born three years later.

Belfast's Jewish community (which would produce the sixth President of Israel, Chaim Herzog) grew to around 8,000 by the turn of the century, and Otto would become the acknowledged leader of this community. He was described as. "Shrewd, sharp-witted, far seeing and [whilst] almost parsimonious in business, he is lavish in unostentatious charities." It is certainly true that he gave generously both within the Jewish community and in many donations to Belfast society. He also helped found Belfast's Technical College and contributed £4,000 to Queen's University, helping to open seven new laboratories. He was also

a member of the Harbour Board and a Governor of the Royal Victoria Hospital.

He was also prominent in public life. He was first elected as city councillor in 1879, reaching the heights of Lord Mayor in 1899/1900 and again in 1904/5. Knighted in 1900, he became High Sheriff of Belfast a year later. His father Daniel had laid the foundation stone of the first synagogue in Belfast in Great Victoria Street in 1871, when the city's Jewish population was just 55. Clearly, this was not large enough to house the growing number of Jews in the city. Sir Otto, in turn, now contributed most of the money to build a new synagogue, Greenville Hall, in Annesley Street, Carlisle Circus, which he opened on August 31st 1904 (it later became part of the Mater Hospital). The area around Carlisle Circus and New Lodge became the hub of a Jewish population boosted by refugees from Russia. This influx was reflected three years later when Otto's wife Paula founded the Jaffe Public Elementary School at the corner of Cliftonville and Antrim Road, which burned down in the 1990s.

Sadly, despite the huge contribution made by the Jaffe family, they were the victims of intimidation and suspicion during the First World War due to their German origins and Sir Otto was forced to leave Belfast. Among the few reminders of that contribution and Belfast's once thriving Jewish community is the Jewish section of the Belfast City Cemetery (bought by Otto's brother Martin), and the Jaffe Memorial Fountain, now in Victoria Square Shopping Centre. Sir Otto died in England in 1929.





# thomas sloan

INDEPENDENT UNIONIST

1870 - 1941

Thomas Sloan, who founded the Independent Orange Order, was born in 1870 and lived much of his life in Tiger's Bay, North Belfast. A shipyard worker, he belonged to the Belfast Protestant Association, which was formed to oppose 'Romanism' in all its manifestations, not least any potential influence it might have on the Church of Ireland. With a gift for

self-promotion and street politics, Thomas moved to the fore of the organisation when two senior colleagues were imprisoned for street protests.

The seeds of the Independent Orange Order were sown at the Twelfth demonstration at Castlereagh in 1902, when Thomas heckled the speech of County Grand Master of Belfast and Chairman of the Irish Unionist Parliamentary Party, Colonel Sanderson MP, accusing him, among other criticisms, of failing to adequately defend the interests of Irish Protestants at Westminster.

Five days afterwards, the Orange Order hero and Unionist MP for South Belfast, William Johnston, died, leading to a by-election. With typical political acumen Thomas pushed himself forward as the Belfast Protestant Association's candidate, with the notable support of the Chairman of Harland & Wolff, William Pirrie. With his fiery brand of populist Loyalism, Thomas, adopting the mantle of a contemporary Johnston, comfortably defeated his Unionist Party opponent, CW Dunbar-Buller, to take the seat. Soon after, having refused to offer a written apology to the

Orange Order for his performance at the Twelfth demonstration at Castlereagh, Thomas and his supporters were suspended from the Order for two years. An appeal was turned down in June 1903 and the three Orange Order Lodges which had supported the appeal were deprived of their warrants. Returning from the appeal, Thomas was greeted at Great Victoria Railway Station by a crowd of supporters as a hero and on June 11th, several thousand Orangemen met to pass a series of resolutions, including the establishment of the Independent Loyal Orange Institution of Ireland.

With a strong electoral base in the working class Protestant community around Sandy Row, Thomas was able to win re-election to his South Belfast seat in the general election of January 1906 and the Independent Order assisted R. G. Glendinning to win the North Antrim seat. More radical than the official Orange Order, it also stood out against the link between it and the Unionist Party. According to its manifesto, it stood 'on the banks of the Boyne, not as victors...but to hold out the right hand of friendship to those who, while worshipping at other shrines, are yet our countrymen'.

The Independent Order reached its peak of influence in 1907, with 38 affiliated lodges, but its popularity began to wane soon after. Thomas lost his Westminster seat in January 1910 and two years later, at the height of the third Home Rule crisis, his house in Canning Street was stoned. Though he lived on until 1941, his influence was at an end. Today the Independent Orange Order is still in existence and, though not a member, former First Minister and DUP leader Ian Paisley has been a regular speaker at their Twelfth demonstrations.





# stiff little fingers

## PUNK POWER

Jake Burns, vocalist and guitarist with Stiff Little Fingers, one of the most influential and best-loved bands of the punk era, was born on February 21st 1958 in the front bedroom of the family house in Joanmount Park. His father was an engineer at Mackie's (where Jake himself worked briefly after leaving school) on the Springfield Road, and his mother a seamstress. He has a younger sister, Carolyn.

He recalls a typical North Belfast childhood, "I loved walking over Cave Hill and down to the Zoo, playing football in the street, seeing films at the Park Cinema," he says. Despite his future career, the family were not particularly musical, though his parents were big country and western fans. "The closest thing to a local influence on my taking up the guitar was seeing Rory Gallagher on television," he says now.

It was at the Belfast Boys' Model School on the Ballysillan Road that Jake first met two future members of the original Stiff Little Fingers, Henry Cluney and Brian Faloon (Ali McMordie, the bassist, attended the Belfast Royal Academy). The former three, along with bassist Gordon Blair, formed a cover band at school, Highway Star, which became Stiff Little Fingers, the name of a song by the Vibrators, in 1977. "It was just a bunch of friends having fun," Jake recalls. "We only became more serious when we got managers involved (one of whom, Colin McClland, was

from Joanmount too). It seems like yesterday that Henry, Brian and I auditioned Ali (who replaced Gordon) in a church hall on the Antrim Road. Now I find it amazing that they allowed a punk band to rehearse in their hall to start with!"

A local journalist, Gordon Ogilvie, was impressed by the band and encouraged them to write more about their own lives instead of covering other bands' material. Within a fortnight Jake came back with **Suspect Device and Wasted Life**. The unique mixture of personal and political issues in the lyrics, combined with their energetic style and infectious hooks, soon brought the band to the attention of the famous BBC Radio One DJ, John Peel, who started playing their self-produced records on air. This in turn led to a distribution deal with record company Rough Trade in England, and the release of the punk rock classic **Alternative Ulster** in 1978.

Within a few months the band were touring the UK and their first album, **Inflammable Material**, charting their frustration at the Troubles, stormed into the charts. The band, with Jim Reilly replacing Brian Faloon, moved to London, signing to Chrysalis Records and releasing the LP **Nobody's Heroes** a year later. Two more albums followed, **Go For It** and **Now Then**, the latter alienating some of their punk followers, though at the time Jake thought it was their best album. The band split in 1983 to pursue solo careers but reformed in 1988 and have performed in various incarnations ever since, most recently with Ali McMordie, the only other original member, rejoining Jake. Now living in the US, Jake returns to Belfast often on Stiff Little Fingers tours.



# gerry fitt

SDLP FOUNDER

1926 - 2005

One of the most influential politicians in Northern Ireland's history, Gerry Fitt received a tough working class upbringing in North Belfast. Born in 1926, he was the third of six children brought up by George and Mary Ann Fitt, initially in the tiny house of George's widowed mother, Elizabeth, off the Antrim Road in the New Lodge area.

Gerry began his education at the Star of the Sea Convent Primary School on Hallidays Road, just off the Antrim Road. Each Sunday the family attended Mass at St Patrick's Roman Catholic Church in Donegall Street. When he was older, Gerry, who always dreamed of going to sea, would wander off afterwards to Queen's Bridge to look at the cross-channel steamers tied up along Donegall Quay.

In 1934, when Gerry was eight, George Fitt died after a leg wound turned gangrenous and he refused to allow it to be amputated. In order to help with the now depleted family finances, Gerry took a delivery job at Cooper's grocery shop in Dawson Street, working two hours before school and several evenings after school too. At the age of twelve, Gerry was sent to St Patrick's School in Donegall Street, where his ability in English and his command of words impressed his teachers. But the family's dire financial situation forced him to leave

school early and take on a job as a messenger boy for a firm in East Belfast. The family were now living at 66 York Street.

Gerry met his wife Ann Doherty, with whom he would have six daughters, just after the Second World War, when he had been a seaman. They were married on November 5th 1947, renting a room back in Ship Street in Belfast. For some years Gerry continued to work as a merchant seaman but he became more and more involved in politics, cutting his teeth with the Dock Labour Party in the late forties and early fifties. After one or two false starts he was elected to Belfast Corporation (now Belfast City Council) in 1958 and four years later he became the Independent Eire Labour member for the Dock Division at Stormont. He was elected to the Westminster Parliament in 1966, representing West Belfast, where he had long been building up a strong political base.

At Westminster he fought to end religious discrimination and gain a review of the electoral boundaries. He became a high-profile leader of the civil rights marches of the late sixties and maintained a strong opposition to the use of violence throughout his career. A lifelong socialist, in 1970 he and several other Stormont MPs formed the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), of which he became its first leader. He sat in the new Northern Ireland Assembly from 1973 to 1975, and was deputy to Brian Faulkner in the short-lived power-sharing Northern Ireland Executive, which had been created by the Sunningdale Agreement. He was made a life peer in 1983 and moved with his wife to England. He died in 2005.

# thomas mccabe

ANTI-SLAVERY CAMPAIGNER

1740 - 1821

In the late 18th century, led largely by its influential Presbyterian merchants, Belfast was a hotbed of radical ideas. One of the foremost of these radicals was Thomas McCabe, whose house, The Vicinage (on the site of which now stands St Malachy's College on the present day Antrim Road), became an important meeting place for the rebels.

Born in Lurgan around 1740, he set up a prosperous watch-making and jewellery business in North Street. He also built one of the earliest cotton mills in the area, in partnership with John McCracken, the father of Henry Joy McCracken who would become a local leader of the United Irishmen. He is credited with co-inventing a more efficient form of cotton loom too. In the 1770s he and McCracken installed machinery in the Belfast Poorhouse in Clifton Street which enabled it to become the town's first spinning mill and he funded and devised training schemes for the younger inhabitants of the institution. A man of radical thinking he initially believed that his aims, such as Catholic emancipation and the end to religious division and inequality, could be achieved peacefully and constitutionally.

Much respected in Belfast, his influence was demonstrated in 1786 when a number of local merchants, led by the wealthy Waddell Cunningham, attempted to enlist backers to outfit a 300-ton ship to transport slaves from Africa and the West Indies. Standing near the Old Exchange at the foot of Donegall Street, Thomas tore up the prospectus for the proposed company and declared: "May God wither the hand and consign the name to eternal infamy of the man who will sign that document." So successful was his description of the horrors of the trade and



its conflict with Christian values that the venture collapsed and Belfast would remain aloof from the slave trade.

The visits of the man described as the 'father of Irish republicanism', Wolfe Tone, to Belfast accelerated the movement towards rebellion. Tone clearly had great respect for Thomas, mentioning him often in his diary. On April 1st 1791 a committee was set up in Belfast 'to form an association to invite all Irishmen for the restoration and preservation of our liberty.' Thomas was a key member and many meetings were held at the Vicinage. The Society of United Irishmen was formed out of this committee on October 11th of that year. The Vicinage would also host many discussions leading to the failed United Irishmen rebellion of 1798.

In 1793 Thomas's shop was attacked by Government soldiers who smashed its windows and tore down the shutters. The attack was said to have influenced his son William to join the United Irishmen himself, repainting on the damaged sign, 'Thomas McCabe, an Irish slave, licensed to sell gold and silver'.

William Putnam McCabe became a political organiser for the United Irishmen and was involved in producing its newspaper, The Northern Star. He escaped to England after the rebellion was put down and died in Scotland in 1821, a year after his father's death.



Boating on the Thames  
Sir John Lavery

© Felix Rosensteil's Widow & Son Ltd

Lavery

Self Portrait (1928)  
Sir John Lavery 1856-1941  
©By courtesy Felix Rosenstiel's Widow & Son Ltd.,  
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of Ulster Museum, Belfast  
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# sir john lavery

SOCIETY PAINTER

1856 - 1941

The son of Henry, a wine and spirit merchant of North Queen Street, and his wife Mary, John Lavery was born in 1856 and baptised at St Patrick's Roman Catholic Church in Donegall Street. Within three years both parents had died, leaving John, his elder brother and younger sister, orphans. John and his brother spent the next few years on an uncle's farm in Moira, County Down, before he was sent to a distant relative in Ayrshire, Scotland.

He began working life in Glasgow as an apprentice to a leading photographer. He also began to attend art classes at the Haldane Academy of Art in the city. Financed by insurance money from the burning down of his studio, he was able to pursue his art studies in London and Paris. He began selling paintings, such **The Courtship of Julia Peveril**, while still studying. His painting style developed while a student at the Académie Julian in Paris. While in France he spent "the happiest times of my life" in the beautiful artistic colony of Grez, where he painted one of his finest works, **The Bridge at Grez**.

Returning to Glasgow, he and like-minded artists became part of 'the Glasgow School', promoting modern French techniques in Britain. A major breakthrough came when he was asked to record the state visit to Glasgow of Queen Victoria in 1888.

His first marriage, to Katherine MacDermott, ended in tragedy when she died a year later, giving birth to his only child, Eileen. Kathleen is immortalised in his painting, **An Irish Girl**. By the time he met his second wife, American Hazel Martyn, the great love of his life, he was an artist of world renown. Much younger and one of the most beautiful women of her era, she would become the inspiration for many of his paintings, beginning with **Mother and Daughter**. With the vivacious Hazel cementing his place within London society, John painted figures as diverse as Anna Pavlova, George Bernard Shaw, JM Barrie and Winston Churchill and, in 1913, he was commissioned to paint the royal family. Appointed as an Official War Artist in 1917, and assigned to the Royal Navy, he painted the surrender of the German Fleet in 1918. He received his knighthood in the same year.

The Lavery's Kensington home became a neutral meeting place during the treaty negotiations following the Irish War of Independence. In gratitude for their help during the talks, the Irish government invited John to use Hazel as a model for Erin on Irish banknotes. He was made President of the Belfast Art Society in 1919 and on the opening of the Belfast (now Ulster) Museum he donated 35 of his paintings. In 1930 he was made a Freeman of the City of Belfast, the first artist to be celebrated in this way. His triptych, **The Madonna Of The Lakes** (using Hazel and Alice as models), is in St Patrick's Church in Donegall Street. He died in 1941, six years after the death of Hazel.



# louis macneice

THE PEOPLE'S POET

1907 - 1963

One of the most influential poets of his generation, Louis MacNeice was born at Brookhill Avenue, just off Cliftonville Road in North Belfast on September 12th 1907. Louis was the youngest of the three children of the Reverend John Frederick MacNeice and Elizabeth Clesham. In 1909, the family moved to Carrickfergus, where his father became rector.

Louis was a lonely child, with few friends of his own age and only his brother, who had learning disabilities, and sister for company. He was deeply attached to his mother, a kind and loving woman, who became ill when he was just five. A hospital operation in 1913 triggered a serious depression and illness and she changed overnight. An image of her walking in the garden in tears would haunt the poet throughout his life. She died a year after the operation, leaving the young Louis forlorn.

It was a difficult childhood in other ways. His father, whose tales of his boyhood in Connemara enthralled Louis as a child, was a man of strong convictions and his opposition to the Covenant on religious grounds caused friction with many northern Protestants. Indeed as Louis grew up, he felt alienated from both the orange and green Irish identities. He was in awe of his father. "My mother was comfort and my father somewhat alarm", he once wrote. Though his father made a deep impression on his life, and features strongly in his poetry, Louis became sceptical about Christianity, as indeed he was about many things.

He was sent to England for his formal education, first to a school in Dorset and then to the famous public school, Marlborough, where his friends included Anthony Blunt and the future Poet Laureate, John Betjeman. It was at Oxford, however, where he read Classics, where he met the two poets with whom he would form his most important friendships, WH Auden and Stephen Spender. Along with another Oxbridge contemporary, Cecil Day Lewis, their honest, understated poems would greatly influence British poetry in the 1930s.

He lectured at Birmingham University and, later, at London University but his main occupation was working as a producer for the Features Department of the BBC, which he joined during the Second World War, and for whom he wrote some acclaimed radio plays, such as *The Dark Tower*, a war allegory with a score by Benjamin Britten.

His approach to poetry is best defined by his 1938 publication, *Modern Poetry: A Personal Essay*, in which he stresses the need to communicate with ordinary people. Poetry, he felt, should be the 'conscience' of the people. His first collection of poems, *Blind Fireworks*, appeared in 1929 and his final, and some say finest, collection of poems, *The Burning Perch*, was published posthumously. A shy man, his private relationships were not successful, with two failed marriages. He had a son, Daniel, from his first marriage, to Mary Beazley. He died in 1963 after contracting pneumonia while trying to obtain sound effects potholing in Yorkshire for his final radio play, *Persons from Porlock*.



# martin lynch

## VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY

Over the last fifteen years or so, a distinctive brand of theatre has emerged from Belfast - accessible, lively, rooted in the community and entertaining. One of its key exponents is Martin Lynch, whose plays, like the hilarious **The History of the Troubles (Accordin' to My Da)** and powerful **Holding Hands at Paschendale** have helped put Belfast theatre on the map. Born in the upstairs bedroom of 19 Moffat Street, between North Queen Street and York Street, on November 22nd 1950, Martin has vivid memories of his North Belfast upbringing. "York Street then was a major thoroughfare, near the busy docks, full of factories, pubs and shops, a bustling lively place with the constant sound of ship and factory horns. There was a lot of poverty and hardship but I recall that community with great fondness".

Father Jimmy was a docker, his mother, Veronica, a mill worker. With eight brothers and three sisters, their tiny two-up, two-down house was cramped, even with three siblings departing each evening to sleep at their grandmother's, and Martin shared a bed with seven siblings for much of his childhood. His first school was St Malachy's Primary School at the bottom of the New Lodge Road, followed by St Patrick's Bearnageeha, which he left at fifteen.

He retains a great admiration for his father. "He was a voracious reader - he loved Yeats and Robbie Burns - and would regularly send me to his friends to exchange books. I remember him taking me to Central Library and complaining there were no books, he'd read them all." Sober and respectable all week, Martin remembers the family waiting in trepidation for his father



to return after payday on Thursday evening. "Then it would be either 'Jimmy the Streetfighter' returning, terrifying us with reconstructions of his fights in Sailortown, or 'Jimmy the Poet', reciting poetry". An important influence was the Belfast Newsboy's club, Ireland's oldest youth club, at the corner of Frederick Street and York Street, where Catholic and Protestant boys played football and boxed together and where Martin saw the end-of-year-revue sketches and thought, "I can do that".

Unable to gain employment as a docker, Martin worked as a cloth cutter for several years. He began his writing career in 1976 with the Fellowship Community Theatre at Turf Lodge, West Belfast, joining the Lyric Theatre as writer-in-residence in 1980, where his first play was **Dockers**. He has since written numerous, highly acclaimed plays, such as **The Interrogation Of Ambrose Fogarty and Rinty**, about the world champion boxer from North Belfast, and co-wrote the screenplay for **Prayer for the Dying** starring Mickey Rourke and Liam Neeson. Ironically, the secret of his widespread success might lie in his insistence on writing for his own community. "I write for Belfast people," he says. "The people I grew up with, you have to keep their attention with lively drama. You can be serious, but you must entertain as well. Really, I'm only a minutes-taker for the community".



**“Sir Edward was the first to  
sign the ‘Solemn League and  
Covenant’ in Belfast City Hall,  
which he organised”**

Sir Edward Carson making the first signature to the Ulster  
Solemn League and Covenant, 28th September 1912  
Photograph © National Museums Northern Ireland 2008  
Ulster Museum, Belfast  
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# sir edward carson

UNIONIST CHAMPION

1854 - 1935

Born into a middle class Protestant family in Dublin on February 9th 1854, Edward Carson went on to study Law at Trinity College and was subsequently called to the Irish Bar. Incisive and eloquent, his skills as a barrister would later serve his political career too. In 1889 he became the youngest Queen's Counsel in Ireland and, three years later, he became both Solicitor General for Ireland and a Liberal

Unionist MP at Westminster. He also became known as an articulate and vociferous opponent of Home Rule.

Soon after, he moved to London, where his most famous trial was defending the Marquis of Queensbury against an ill-advised libel suit from Oscar Wilde. His destruction of Wilde during his cross-examination destroyed Wilde's case and ultimately led to his ruin. Meanwhile Edward Carson's political career continued to thrive. In 1910, ten years after his knighthood, he became leader of the Irish Unionist Parliamentary Party and the most influential advocate of retaining the union between Britain and Ireland. He was also instrumental in forming the Ulster Volunteer Force in preparation to forcibly defend that union. Sir Edward was the first to sign the 'Solemn League and Covenant' in Belfast City Hall, which he organised, on September 28th 1912, which pledged to use all means which might be found

necessary to 'defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule parliament in Ireland.' Nearly half-a-million people were to follow his signature.

During the First World War he became part of the British Government, first as Attorney General and then Lord of the Admiralty. After the war he became MP for Duncairn in North Belfast between December 1918 and May 1921 (he became Lord Duncairn in 1921). Ironically, though his efforts had done so much to bring it about, the establishment of six counties of Ulster as Northern Ireland under the Government of Ireland Act 1920, had never been Sir Edward's intention. Until 1913, when he realised it was futile, he campaigned for the whole of Ireland to defeat Home Rule. Indeed when he was later invited to become Northern Ireland's first Prime Minister, he declined, partly because it would have meant operating under the Government of Ireland Act of 1920, which he disliked.

In 1933 Lord Craigavon unveiled a statue of Carson in front of the Parliament Buildings at Stormont, at which Carson was present. He died two years later in England, leaving behind four children to his first wife Annette (who had died in 1913) and one son to his second wife, Ruby. He was given a state funeral (the only one in Northern Irish history) in Belfast, with crowds lining the route of his funeral cortege. A special Act of Parliament was passed to allow him to become the only person to be buried in St Anne's Cathedral.



# sir george clark

SHIPBUILDING GIANT

1861 - 1935

It was only typical Belfast humour, and the proximity of that giant of shipbuilding Harland & Wolff, that caused people to refer to Workman, Clark & Co's North Belfast premises as "the Wee Yard". At its prime the 'forgotten' Belfast Shipyard on the north bank of the Lagan, was producing more tonnage than

almost any other firm in the United Kingdom and employed over 9,000 workers. That was a testimony to the remarkable abilities of its two owners, Frank Workman and George Clark.

Born in Paisley, Scotland in 1861, George's father, James, was a partner in a large thread manufacturing firm. More helpfully, as it would turn out, his mother, Jane, was the daughter of the founder of the City Line shipping company, George Smith. George Clark was educated at Merchiston Castle School in Edinburgh before joining Harland and Wolff in Belfast as a young apprentice. It was there he met Frank Workman, just a few years older, who was a premium apprentice at the fast-developing shipyard. With remarkable courage and ambition the two young men decided to form a rival company on four acres of land on the north bank of the Lagan and registered their new firm of Workman, Clark & Co in April 1880, when George was just nineteen. They soon had 150 men working for them and were producing their first ships, Ethel and William Hinde.

Soon the City Line connection would pay off, giving the company their first major order for the barque City of Cambridge.

For the first decade the company contracted out the production of engines for the ships it built and was constricted in the size and complexity of its ships by the limitations of its premises. However, by 1891 business had increased enough to justify the creation of their own engine works and they could now undertake the complete construction of ships. Expansion increased rapidly after they acquired the shipyard and engine works of the bankrupt McIlwaine and McColl on the south bank of the river. They were now occupying a 40-acre site. Over the next two decades there was a huge expansion in the firm's output as a result. In 1902 they employed 5,000 men and the previous year had even managed to outdo Harland & Wolff's Belfast works in tonnage. By 1909, when they were employing 9,000 men, they claimed their total tonnage exceeded that of any other shipbuilding firm in the United Kingdom.

Much of this success was due to George's extraordinary business acumen but his focus was not confined to shipbuilding. A firm opponent of Home Rule, he was MP for North Belfast between 1907 and 1910 and was also a member of the Northern Ireland Senate from 1925 to 1935, where he was Deputy Speaker from 1932 to 1934. He was created 1st Baronet Clark of Dunlambert, Belfast in 1917 for his wartime services to the shipbuilding industry. He resigned from Workman, Clark & Co in 1920 just prior to a decline in their fortunes. The company finally closed in 1935, ironically the year of George's death.

# amy carmichael

PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE

1867 - 1951

Amy Beatrice Carmichael dedicated her life to missionary work and left behind a rich heritage of books, hymns and poetry. Born on December 16th 1867 in the County Down village of Millisle, she was the eldest of the seven children of David Carmichael, who owned two flour mills in the village, and his wife Catherine.

Brought up a Presbyterian, Amy's life changed after she and her brothers helped a destitute old woman after a church service, and, though initially embarrassed to be seen in the woman's company by members of her congregation, heard God's voice encouraging her. One of her brothers recalled that she shut herself in her room at 21 College Gardens that afternoon and talked to God and settled once and for all the pattern of her future life. Influenced by Henry Montgomery of the Belfast City

Mission, she began to work with the poor of Belfast, particularly the mill girls (known as 'shawlies'), taking them to her local church, Rosemary Street Presbyterian Church, for services. So great were the numbers attending that it soon became clear that a bigger building would be needed for them, and 'The Welcome Hall' in Cambrai Street, North Belfast, was constructed with funds Amy helped to raise. It was later rebuilt and was rededicated in 2007.

Her overseas mission work began in Japan in 1893, but her great work would be in India, for which she left in November 1895.

Here, she became aware of the many young Indian girls offered by their parents as temple prostitutes (a practise banned in the State of Madras in 1947). The first such child she rescued was seven-year-old Preena, in 1901. Horrified by her terrible account of the life for which she was destined, Amy quickly offered Preena protection. Convinced it was God's calling to rescue these children, she, along with a group of evangelical women she belonged to, 'The Starry Cluster', began taking in her first female refugees. It was when she moved to Dohnavur, in Tamil Nadu, in the far south of India, however, that the work for which she would become famous began.

Known as 'Amma' or mother, she dedicated the next fifty years of her life to rescuing young girls from situations of great danger. The mission and orphanage she established grew over the years and in 1912, came recognition from Queen Mary and a hospital was later added. Over the years Amy would take in many hundreds of vulnerable children, often travelling great distances to rescue them. She and her co-workers not only rescued the children but gave them a Christian upbringing too. Not all the workers were Indian but all, including Amy, wore Indian dress.

Amy's health became precarious after a fall in 1931 and she was bedridden for the last years of her life, dying in 1951. However, her great legacy, the Dohnavur Fellowship, still exists to protect vulnerable children in India. A prolific writer, she also left some 37 publications, including *Gold Cord*, her own history of the Dohnavur Fellowship, and many hymns and poems.

A blue plaque was erected to Amy at the Welcome Evangelical Church in Cambrai Street in September 2007.



**“God didn’t want me,  
and the devil was  
afraid of me”**



# john linehan (aka may mcfettridge)

## DAME OF COMEDY

Luciano Pavarotti and Sarah Bernhardt might have graced the stage of the Grand Opera House but no star on earth can match the number of appearances made there by Belfast's grand dame of panto, May McFettridge, who completed a record 16th season there in 2008. May, who celebrates her 21st birthday in August 2008, though looking a little older than her years, is of course the alter ego of North Belfast man John Linehan, an accomplished actor and stand-up comedian in his own right.

Born on November 7th 1951, John's first home was on the Old Park Road. One of five children, his father, from County Cork and his West Belfast mother moved the family to the Cave Hill Road when he was ten. He went to Sacred Heart Primary School on the Old Park Road, followed by St Patrick's Bearnageeha (where playwright Martin Lynch was also a pupil). He left school at fifteen, starting an apprenticeship as a mechanic. He has always lived in North Belfast, apart from a few years in Dublin, where he and wife Brenda (they now have two daughters and a grandchild) decided to live after surviving a pub bombing in Belfast in 1973. It was not his last brush with death. In 1979, not long after returning to Belfast, he contracted meningitis after an operation and was given the last rites. He survived. "God didn't want me, and the devil was afraid of me", he says now.



Always known for his quick wit, his foray into comedy came about by chance. In 1987, his wife's cousin, Eamonn Holmes, then a presenter on Downtown Radio, suggested, while leaving his car to be serviced, that John have a bit of fun calling his phone-in programme. Duly complying, John decided to take the role of a Belfast woman, quickly adopting the name May, after his mother-in-law and McFettridge after a GAA player whose name leapt out from the Irish News before him. The conversation went on longer than anticipated, running the rule over a host of subjects from varicose veins to rude bus drivers.

Overwhelming public reaction to "the funny wee woman" resulted in 'May' returning as a regular Downtown attraction. Soon the famous McFettridge look - woolly hat, cardigan, skirt, thick tights, flat slippers and blacked-out teeth - were added. A regular on Gerry Kelly's TV show, May also had her own show and became a popular performer on television. Thanks to a recommendation from Ian Tough of the Krankies, she began her illustrious career as a panto dame at the Grand Opera House, where she has played in everything from **Cinderella** to **Jack and the Beanstalk**. There is even a bust of May in the foyer of the recently extended theatre. John has also performed as himself, in **An Audience with John Linehan** there. An accomplished actor he has appeared in the film **Divorcing Jack** and a short film, **Black Taxi**. A regular worker for charity, including Children in Crossfire, he organises an annual golf charity event for them. He was awarded an MBE in 2006.



# william ritchie

FOUNDER OF BELFAST SHIPBUILDING

1756 - 1834

The pre-eminence of the builders of RMS Titanic, Harland & Wolff, has tended to overshadow the crucial role in the development of Belfast shipbuilding of William Ritchie, whose dry dock can still be seen today at Clarendon Dock. The Scot is generally acknowledged as the town's first major shipbuilder, setting in motion the industry that, more than any other, would come to define Belfast's golden age.

By the end of the 18th century, Belfast Port had become an important trading centre, but few ships were built locally and these tended to be smaller vessels. By the beginning of the 1790s nearly all ships were built and repaired in Scotland and England.

That situation changed in March 1791 with the arrival of William Ritchie. Born in 1756, in Saltcoats, Ayrshire, he had already established his own shipyard in the town of his birth. Once in Belfast, he quickly decided the town's potential for shipbuilding offered more than Saltcoats. He returned in July of that year, bringing with him ten men, apparatus and materials for shipbuilding. He founded his shipyard on a site now covered by Corporation Square and also built a graving dock just north of the Harbour Commissioners' Office (completed in 1800). He launched his first ship, the 300-ton *Hibernia*, on July 7th 1792, a remarkably quick turnaround for the largest ship of its kind yet to be built in Belfast.

Because of the lack of regular employment in Belfast there was a dearth of skilled ship workers, such as ship carpenters, so William brought over from Scotland joiners, blockmakers and blacksmiths. He made improvements to the Port too, reclaiming land from the sea and fronting the quays with stone. In 1800 he built a graving dock for the Ballast Board, which became known as 'Ritchie's Dock'. By 1811, he had built 31 ships of up to 429 tons in size. Though just a fraction of the future Harland & Wolff workforce, he could claim the following year to have employed in his two shipyards, 44 journeymen carpenters, 55 apprentices, 7 pairs of sawyers, 12 blacksmiths and several joiners. William himself said of his ships, that, "For elegance of mould, fastness of sailing, and utility in every respect they are unrivalled in any of the ports they trade to."

His brother Hugh, who had been his partner until 1798, also began his own shipbuilding firm, which was taken over by another brother, John, in 1807. It was later joined by another Scot, Alexander McLaine and, on John's death, became known as McLaine & Sons. It was they who launched Belfast's first steamship, the 200-ton *Belfast*. William, who lived in James Street, retired in 1824 to devote himself to charitable activities and his company was taken over by Charles Connell, his Scottish assistant. William died in 1834 and was buried in Clifton Street Cemetery. Within a couple of decades, on nearby Queen's Island, another company would build on his legacy to become the world's greatest shipbuilders, Harland & Wolff. A Blue Plaque commemorating William Ritchie is located at the Harbour Commissioners' Offices in Corporation Square.





# chaim herzog

ISRAEL'S LONGEST SERVING PRESIDENT

1918-1997

One of the most influential figures in the early years of the State of Israel, Chaim Herzog, who became Israel's sixth and longest serving President, was born on September 17th 1918 at 185 Clifton Park Avenue (now 2 Norman Villas). When his father, Dr Isaac Herzog, was appointed Chief Rabbi of Ireland, the family moved to Dublin where Chaim spent most of his formative years. The family emigrated to Palestine, then under British mandate, in 1935, though Chaim subsequently moved to London to finish his education. In London he studied Law and was called to the Bar in 1942. He joined the British Army during the Second World War and saw first hand the terrible suffering of Jews in the Nazi concentration camps.

This experience fuelled his determination to help set up a Jewish state and he returned to Palestine in 1946. Active in the Haganah Jewish underground, he became a successful general in the Israeli Army and later held several important positions after Israel was created in 1948, including chief delegate to the United Nations from 1975 to 1978. Most notably he served two five-year terms as Israel's sixth President between 1983 and 1993. He died four years after resigning. A blue plaque marks his birthplace off the Cliftonville Road.



**“In his first season Celtic won the domestic treble and his overall record included three championships and a runner’s up trophy in the 2003 UEFA Cup”**



# martin o'neill

## INSPIRATIONAL MANAGER

One of the most charismatic and successful football managers in the British game, Martin O'Neill spent an important period of his early life in North Belfast. The sixth of nine children he was born in the small farming town of Kilrea, County Londonderry on March 1st 1952. His sporting talents were soon evident as he and his brothers played soccer and Gaelic football in the back garden. Encouraged by his mother Greta to pursue his education, Martin

won a scholarship to the prestigious St Columb's College in Derry City (where his friends included singer Phil Coulter). At St Columb's he was part of a County Derry minors team which reached the All-Ireland Semi-Finals.

In the late 1960s, while Martin was preparing for his O-Levels, father Leo, a barber, moved the family to a red-bricked two-storey house on the corner of Madison Avenue and Kansas Avenue in North Belfast. Martin attended St Malachy's College on the Antrim Road, the oldest Roman Catholic grammar school in Northern Ireland, where his headmaster recalls his qualities of quiet leadership. Inspired by Martin, their Gaelic football team thrived, winning the prestigious under-19 MacCromy Cup and only being narrowly defeated in the All-Ireland Final. As well as taking three A-Levels, he was also playing soccer to a high level and was part of a successful Distillery FC team. Then based on the

Grosvenor Road, their team, composed of players from both the Shankill and Falls, beat Derry City in the Irish Cup Final of 1971.

At the age of 19, while studying Law at Queen's University, he was discovered by **Nottingham Forest** who brought him to England for a fee of £19,000. His family soon followed and within a few years were able to see Martin playing in what became one of the great English soccer sides. It was when the legendary Brian Clough arrived as manager in 1975 that the team really took off, and though he and Martin clashed, he always valued his combative and influential midfielder. Under Clough, Forest gained promotion to Division One (now the Premier League) and won the League and League Cup in 1978, followed by further League Cup success a year later and two European Cup triumphs. Martin also played regularly for Northern Ireland, captaining them at the 1982 World Cup in Spain, where they defeated the host nation.

But it is as a manager that Martin really made his name, first taking non-league **Wycombe Wanderers** into the Football League, followed by a second successive promotion into Division Two and then taking **Leicester City** to the Premiership and the League Cup. He was hugely popular at Leicester but the offer to take over at his beloved **Celtic** in 2000 could not be turned down. In his first season the club won the domestic treble and his overall record included three championships and a runner's up trophy after losing to Porto in the 2003 UEFA Cup Final. He left Celtic in 2005 and is currently enjoying success as manager of **Aston Villa**.



# bernard maclaverty

ACCLAIMED NOVELIST

Bernard MacLaverty, the author of acclaimed novels such as **Lamb** and **Cal**, draws much of his inspiration from his early life, growing up in North Belfast. Born on September 14th 1942, he lived at number 73 Atlantic Avenue, off the Antrim Road, with his parents,

brother Peter, grandparents and a great aunt. Like many from North Belfast, he has happy childhood memories when he formed friendships which have lasted a lifetime.

His otherwise happy childhood was struck with sadness when Bernard was twelve, a vulnerable age he often returns to in his work. It was then that his father, Johnny, a commercial artist, died. "It was an enormous change in my life," he said later, "especially at that age when you're coming into adolescence, hormones are changing, all of those things. I see it as a kind of fulcrum, from childhood into adulthood. It's a place worth exploring, that relationship between fathers and sons".

Now the sole breadwinner, his mother went out to work as a shop assistant in a hobby shop in Gresham Street. Bernard was now at St Malachy's College, which again has featured indirectly in his work. Although his A-Level results were not good enough to get him a scholarship he did get a job at Queen's University in 1960, as a lab technician in the Anatomy Department. However, Bernard was already developing his talent as a creative writer and came to the attention of English lecturer Phillip

Hobsbaum, who had seen a short story of his in a university magazine. Hobsbaum invited him to meetings of a group he organised of unpublished writers and poets based around Queen's. Undaunted by the company, which included Seamus Heaney and Michael Longley, Bernard read out his work for criticism from the group, "You got your opportunity every ten or fifteen weeks to stand up and do your new piece" he says now. "Everyone then would appraise or pick at it".

In 1970 Bernard enrolled at Queen's as an English student, finally qualifying as a teacher. He continued to write and in 1977 his first book of short stories was published by Belfast publishers, Blackstaff Press. By this time Bernard, wife Madeline and his four children had moved to Scotland, first teaching in Edinburgh, then on the Isle of Islay, off the west coast of Scotland. His first two novels, **Lamb** and **Cal**, written during this period, would be made into films (for which he wrote the award-winning screenplays).

In 1981, he felt confident enough to become a full time writer and moved his family to Glasgow, though for two years in the mid-eighties he was writer-in-residence at the University of Aberdeen. Belfast has featured in many of his works, including **Grace Notes**, which was shortlisted for the 1997 Booker Prize. As well as novels, Bernard has written screenplays, short stories, radio plays and, in 2004, he wrote and directed an award-winning short film **'Bye-Child**, based on a Seamus Heaney poem. His most recent work has been the novel **The Anatomy School**, (2004), and a collection of short stories **Matters of Life & Death**, published in 2006.

# william walker

SOCIALIST PIONEER

1871 - 1918

William Walker, leader of the Independent Labour Party, was one of the most important figures in the early Labour movement in Ireland, twice coming close to becoming MP for North Belfast in the early years of the twentieth century.

Born into a working class Protestant family in 1871 William Walker was educated at St George's National School. He first became involved in the trade union movement, which was growing rapidly in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, while an apprentice joiner at Harland & Wolff. He later worked for tobacco manufacturers Gallaher's, where he was blacklisted for striking. At a relatively young age he became local leader of the **Independent Labour Party**, whose national body had been formed by Kier Hardie in 1893.

A passionate speaker he could often be found at Belfast's version of Speaker's Corner, on the steps of the Customs House, during the 1890s, speaking out for the rights of workers. He went on to organise the **Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners** and worked tirelessly on behalf of unskilled and women workers. He was a delegate to the inaugural conference of the **Irish Trade Union Congress** (ITUC) in 1894. Four years later he was elected **Poor Law Guardian** and in 1904 he became councillor for the North Belfast ward of Duncairn on Belfast Corporation and President of the ITUC.

Though becoming increasingly important within Labour circles, his ability to win both Catholic and Protestant votes would be hampered by the influence of his Unionist sympathies on his socialist beliefs, a philosophy that became known as 'Walkerism'. As the perceived threat of Home Rule loomed, William, like many other Protestant trade unionists, gave priority to the



Unionist cause, alienating Catholic workers. Perhaps because of these differences, William was never successful in parliamentary elections though he came very close to winning the North Belfast seat, where his own branch was. In a by-election on September 14th 1905 he came within 474 votes of defeating Sir Daniel Dixon, the Unionist candidate and a Lord Mayor of Belfast. William's agent, Ramsay MacDonald, would later become leader of the Labour Party and its first Prime Minister in 1924. In the general election of 1906, William managed to cut further into Dixon's majority, losing by a mere 291 votes. At this point he was seen as a rising star in the party, and it is said that the 1907 Labour Party Conference, attended by Kier Hardie and Ramsay Macdonald, was held in Belfast to help build William's profile.

Like many other Protestants in the local Labour movement, William was angry at the decision of the British Labour Party in 1913 to give the recently formed Irish Labour Party exclusive organising rights in Ireland. He became involved in heated conflict with James Connolly, a trade union activist in Belfast at the time, over the issue. He stood unsuccessfully for North Belfast for a third time at the 1907 by-election occasioned by Dixon's death. In 1910 Walker unsuccessfully contested the Scottish constituency of Leith Burghs. In 1912 he was appointed Inspector of the National Insurance Scheme for the North East and retired from union work. He died in November 1918 after a long illness.



**“Losing my accent would be sacrificing something very important to me, my own culture contains the whole world”**



# stephen rea

## STAGE AND SCREEN STAR

A screen and stage actor of world renown, Stephen Rea was born at home on Halloween morning in 1946. Home was the Antrim Road in North Belfast, an area which he later said gave him, "The only sense of community I have." From a working class Protestant background, Stephen was the only boy in a family of four. Both his parents had come to the area as part of the pre-war migration to Belfast from the surrounding countryside. Education was

encouraged by his mother, who refused to have a television in the house and sent them to the library once a week to pick up books. To this day, Stephen remains a great admirer of Belfast's Linenhall Library, which he says is "very dear to my heart".

An early indication of his future career came when he played the Wolf in Little Red Riding Hood at the age of four, his first major success. Even then he recalls his attention to detail, insisting that he should be knitting while impersonating the Granny! As a child his favourite haunts were the now disappeared Antrim Road cinemas, The Capital and Lyceum, where watching heroes like Humphrey Bogart and Marlon Brando instilled a desire to become an actor. While taking a degree in English at Queen's University, the Belfast playwright Stewart Parker, then doing an MA at Queen's, encouraged Stephen to spread his wings and try acting elsewhere.

Drawn by its great heritage, including Protestant writers like Synge and Yeats, Stephen began his acting career at the famous Abbey Theatre in Dublin before moving on to London. Despite the initial culture shock, he soon developed into an acclaimed stage actor. He was given his first role by the famous Irish actor Jackie McGowran in Sean O'Casey's **Shadow of a Gunman** at the Mermaid Theatre. He refused to change his Belfast brogue despite the advice of influential directors like Peter Hall. "I felt it would be sacrificing something very important to me," he said later, believing his "own culture is interesting enough and that it contains the whole world." In London, working at prestigious theatres like the National and Royal Court, he won a reputation as one of the most gifted actors of his generation, both for his roles in classic plays by writers such as Chekhov and Ibsen and in plays by some of the finest of the new wave of English writers such as Trevor Griffiths and Christopher Hampton.

He returned to Ireland to found the highly influential **Field Day Company** with the great Irish playwright Brian Friel, beginning with Friel's **Translations**. During this period he made his cinematic debut in **Angel**, directed by Neil Jordan. His major screen breakthrough was also a Neil Jordan film, playing the lead character in **The Crying Game**, for which he won a Best Actor Oscar nomination. Many other high-profile film roles followed, including **The Company of Wolves**, **Life Is Sweet**, **Interview with the Vampire**, **Prêt-à-Porter**, **Michael Collins** and **Breakfast on Pluto**. He continues to return to Belfast regularly and was awarded an Honorary Degree by Queen's University in 2004.



Self portrait of A R Hogg in his mid-thirties, from one of his lantern slides  
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# alexander robert hogg

FRAMING THE PAST

1870 - 1939

We owe much of our visual understanding of Belfast and Northern Ireland in the early 20th century to the talent of one man, Alexander Robert Hogg, who spent many years living and working in North Belfast. Born on March 1st 1870 near Ballynahinch, Co Down, his father, David, was a farmer and he had one brother and a sister.

We know little of his life until he left home to work as an assistant to his uncle James Hogg, who owned a grocer and druggists at 173 York Street. He then spent several years at the firm of Dobbin & Co, grocers, druggist and general merchants. It was during this time that he became an enthusiastic, and clearly talented, amateur photographer. He also experimented with lantern slides (used with magic lanterns, a forerunner of the slide projector), for which he won an award in 1895 from the Ulster Amateur Photographic Society.

He finally committed himself to professional photography at the age of thirty, setting up a studio at No 13 Trinity Street, then a small mixed community of twenty houses near Clifton Street (since demolished to make way for the motorway). In a competitive market - there were at least twenty other studios - his early specialities were technical photography, a commercially astute choice given Belfast's burgeoning industrial eminence, and lantern slides. He became official photographer to shipbuilders,

Workman Clark & Co, and also photographed motorcars and developed a thriving trade in portraits. He also printed and distributed his own postcards and worked for the Ulster Tourist Development Board. He took famous photographs of City Hall on its completion and of the signing there of the Solemn League and Covenant in 1912.

As his career developed he became a serious rival to the then doyen of Belfast photographers, Robert Welch. He also found time to indulge his love of the beautiful Northern Ireland countryside. A member of the orthodox Presbyterian congregation in Rosemary Street, he was known for his pleasant disposition and generous nature and had many friends, including artists such as William Conor.

In 1907 Alexander married Sara Houston, a nurse from the Royal Victoria Hospital, first living in a house in Chichester Road, off the Antrim Road and later moving to 1 Thorndale Avenue, where they lived until Sara's early death in 1932. He had already moved his studio to the city centre, first to High Street and then, after marrying Margaret Mann, his researcher, in 1934, he moved to 67 Great Victoria Street where he lived and worked until he died. His health declined sharply during 1939, and he died on August 25th of that year, and was buried in the City Cemetery in the Falls Road, in the same plot as his parents and first wife. Much of his work was destroyed in the years after his death but, fortunately, the Ulster Museum was able to buy his surviving stock in 1968 and today Alexander Hogg's marvellous visual legacy can be enjoyed by all.





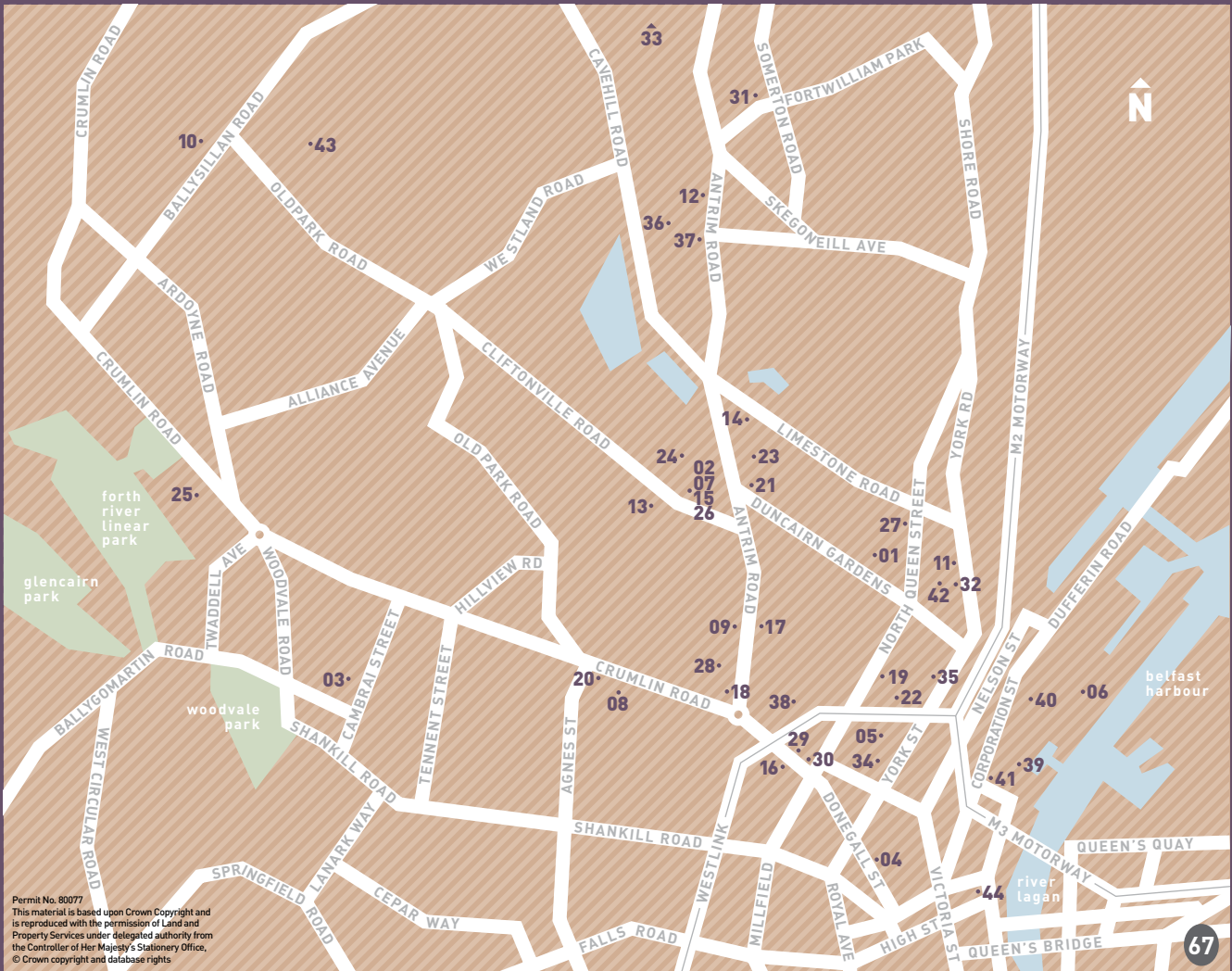
A R Hogg taking photograph of interior dome of City Hall, Belfast  
Photograph © National Museums Northern Ireland 2008  
Ulster Museum, Belfast  
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# north belfast map

- 01 **Kenneth Branagh**  
Mountcollyer Street
- 02 **James Bryce**  
Belfast Royal Academy
- 03 **Amy Carmichael**  
Cambrai Street
- 04 **Sir Edward Carson**  
St Anne's Cathedral
- 05 **Frank Carson**  
Great George's Street
- 06 **Sir George Clark**  
Belfast Harbour
- 07 **John Cole**  
Belfast Royal Academy
- 08 **William Conor**  
Fortingale Street
- 09 **Gerry Fitt**  
York Street
- 10 **Francis Fowke**  
Ballysillan
- 11 **James Galway**  
Vere Street
- 12 **Richard Hayward**  
Antrim Road
- 13 **Chaim Herzog**  
Clifton Avenue
- 14 **Ciarán Hinds**  
Limestone Road
- 15 **Kate Hoey**  
Belfast Royal Academy
- 16 **Alexander Robert Hogg**  
Trinity Street
- 17 **Eamonn Holmes**  
New Lodge Road
- 18 **Sir Otto Jaffe**  
Annesley Street
- 19 **Sir John Lavery**  
North Queen Street
- 20 **John Linehan**  
Old Lodge Road
- 21 **John Luke**  
Duncairn Gardens
- 22 **Martin Lynch**  
Moffat Street
- 23 **Bernard MacLavery**  
Atlantic Avenue
- 24 **Louis MacNeice**  
Brookhill Avenue
- 25 **Mary McAleese**  
Mountainview Gardens
- 26 **Hugh McAlmont Cairns**  
Belfast Royal Academy
- 27 **Sam McAughtry**  
Cosgrave Street
- 28 **Thomas McCabe**  
St Malachy's College (The Vicinage)
- 29 **Henry Joy McCracken**  
Clifton Street Cemetery
- 30 **Mary Ann McCracken**  
Clifton Street Poorhouse
- 31 **Tim McGarry**  
Fortwilliam Park
- 32 **Harry Midgley**  
Seaview Street
- 33 **Gary Mitchell**  
Rathcoole Estate (not on map)
- 34 **Rinty Monaghan**  
Lancaster Street
- 35 **Mulhollands**  
York Street
- 36 **Martin O'Neill**  
Madison Avenue/Kansas Avenue
- 37 **Mary Peters**  
Antrim Road
- 38 **Stephen Rea**  
Glenravel Street
- 39 **William Ritchie**  
Clarendon Dock
- 40 **Buck Alec**  
Sailortown
- 41 **Thomas Sinclair**  
Corporation Square
- 42 **Thomas Sloan**  
Canning Street
- 43 **Stiff Little Fingers**  
Joanmount Park
- 44 **William Walker**  
Custom House Square

Whilst every effort has been made to provide accurate information on individual listings, missing historical information means that accuracy cannot be guaranteed in all cases.

Due to regeneration schemes within North Belfast, several of the streets identified no longer exist; in such cases the general area has been identified.



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