



MHS
HERITAGE &
CULTURE LTD

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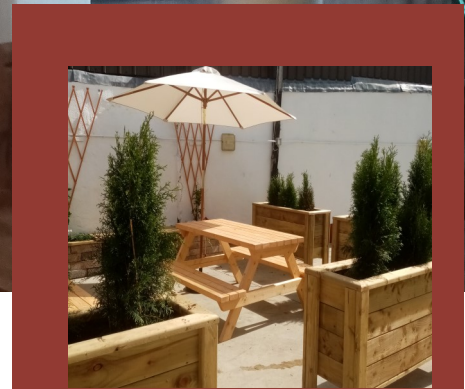
September, 2020



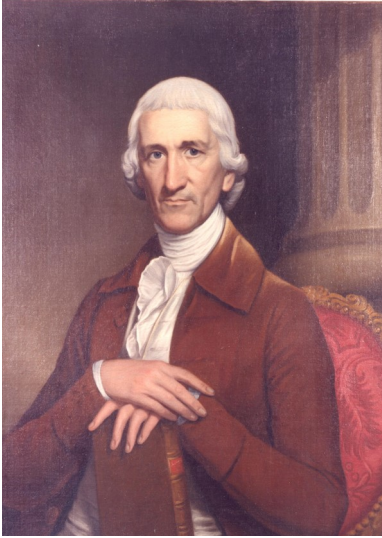
The Hearth: Open Day

We held an informal Open Day on the 28th August at our new premises, The Hearth, at 11 Main Street Maghera to show what had been going on over the past few months.

We had hoped to have the building completed much sooner, but of course the pandemic delayed everybody's plans. Now we are working hard to catch up. The new Tea Room/Social Space is set to open in October and the Men's Shed in November. With Covid it is difficult to make firm commitments, so look out for definite dates and times on Facebook and in the local press over the next weeks. We look forward to welcoming you all back in the near future, and to catching up with each other again. Many thanks once more to our main funders: The National Lottery Community Fund, Ulster Garden Villages, The Trusthouse Charitable Foundation and The Clothworkers' Foundation for making all this possible. A particular word of thanks to the Halifax Foundation for Northern Ireland for awarding us a grant towards kitchen equipment, which we will put to good use in our new facilities.



Charles Thomson: Video by John McHugh



Charles Thomson— patriot leader during the American Revolution, Secretary of the Continental Congress, signatory to the First Declaration of Independence and designer of the Great Seal of the United States — was born here in Maghera in 1729.

He emigrated to America as a young boy and, although he arrived as a penniless orphan, he rose to become an eminent figure in his adopted homeland.

He was known for his honesty, humanity and strict principles as well as for his abilities in regard to business and politics.

One of our members, John McHugh, has made a very informative and enjoyable video on Thomson's life and

achievements. It can be viewed on our website and it is great that such a remarkable person be honoured in his hometown. We thank John very much for the idea of producing this work and for sharing it with us. John himself was born in Fortwilliam outside Tobermore and, like Thomson, moved to America as a young child. However, he has always kept up his connection with the area and we are delighted with his support and promotion of our history and heritage.

<https://www.maghera-heritage.org.uk/the-life-of-charles-thompson/>



Paintings by Vincent McErlean

Local artist, Vincent McErlean, explains that his interest in art began at school but it was many years later before he began to spend much of his time painting. Apart from school art classes, Vincent is self taught and uses digital media and on-line tutorials to learn about colour theory and different painting techniques. However, his real inspiration comes from studying the work of other artists. While his favourite style is Pop-Art, he also enjoys the work of Impressionists, particularly that of Claude Monet. Vincent works in our Centre as a volunteer but has not been able to do so recently due to Covid. Instead he prepared this exhibition for our new building, We are very grateful to him and the paintings can be seen when our new tea/coffee room opens.



New Outdoor Seating Area

We have recently put in place our outdoor seating area which was funded by the National Lottery Community Fund through a Covid Uplift Grant. Many thanks to the National Lottery for their continued support. Many thanks too to the volunteers who rallied around to help put it all together and we hope it is not too late to get some benefit from it this year.

We are grateful to Michael Logue for the great work on the planters and Shaun Mullan for the beautiful seats. Mid-Ulster Garden Centre gave advice and support as well when it came to supplying plants.

Now we just have to hope for some warm autumn evenings.....



Halifax Covid-19 Grant

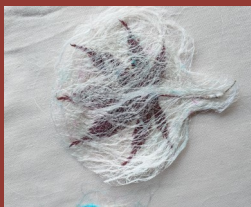
The restrictions caused by Covid-19 impact us all, but perhaps the vulnerable, the elderly and schoolchildren suffer more than most. Thanks to a grant from the Halifax Foundation for Northern Ireland MHS Heritage & Culture Ltd. was able to buy Tablets to distribute in the community among those who could benefit most from access to the internet.

We also got an opportunity (again thanks to the Halifax Foundation) to make a video with Thunderheart Video Production to show the effect of the crisis on people in the town. A wide cross section of the community is being interviewed from teachers, and healthcare workers through to retailers, students and those who had to self-isolate. This will help us to understand what is happening in the community and what people have endured during these unprecedented times as well as being a record of events for the future.

The video will be completed at the end of September and will be available to watch on our website



April McAdams



Concepta Murphy

Silk Fibre Paper-Making

Tunde Toth held two creative workshops for MHS Heritage & Culture Limited during August, teaching Silk Fibre Paper - Making. This technique uses raw silk fibres, fabric dyes and threads to make delicate, colourful decorations and art-works. The workshops were really successful and enjoyable with some beautiful work being produced. Thanks to April McAdams and Concepta Murphy for allowing us to show their work. All Tunde's work, as artist, educator and researcher, promotes the idea of making art easily accessible and available to as many people as possible and we look forward to organising further workshops, perhaps coming up to Christmas.

Knitting Together: Maghera



Great to see so many people become involved in our knitting project!! We ask people to knit or crochet 6'' squares from left-over wool. These are joined up to make blankets and then shipped out to refugee camps where they are badly needed.

All you have to do is knit the squares and drop them into our new premises The Hearth, 11 Main Street, Maghera. We will arrange to pass them on to the Derry Square Knitters who run regular shipments abroad.

Creative Writing

Throughout June and July MHS Heritage & Culture Ltd. ran a series of creative writing workshops, via Zoom, with award-winning author Sheena Wilkinson. These proved very popular and because numbers were limited, we know many of you were disappointed in not being able to join in. We hope to run more later in the year and Sheena has offered to host a Book Club meeting for us, too, featuring her latest novel, *Hope Against Hope*.

Here are some examples of writing which came out of the workshops and we thank the authors for allowing us to include them here.



COOPED UP

The clock had slowed almost to a stop that afternoon. Or so it seemed to Belle. She'd checked it twenty times at least, since lunchtime.

Her tablet was charged now so she unplugged it and positioned it on the kitchen table ready for the call. It suddenly occurred to her that she hadn't spoken to one living creature for two days, not even the robin that came to wait for crumbs. She hadn't seen him for days.

She stared at the bulwark of walls and roofs rising above the fence opposite the window.

I'm so, so tired of this view, she thought. It's been ten weeks. When am I going to get out, to meet people, talk, do things, instead of sitting in here every day?

Six o'clock, finally. She clicked on Facetime and Anna's name. Four rings and Anna's smiling face filled the screen.

How well she looks! Belle thought. Has she had her hair done? No roots showing, like me! And such a lovely cut.

'Oh, Anna. It's so good to see you, to talk to you again. How's everything?'

'Just great, Belle,' Anna said, 'You won't believe this. I'm in Florida!'

'Florida! How could you be there? Why are you not in Long Island?'

'I just had to get out of there. I'd had enough of being cooped up. I needed to be free for a while. So, I'm going to stay down here for a few weeks.'

'But you've such a great place at home – so much room and no-one in it but you and Jim. And that huge garden. You could get lost in it.'

'Oh, I know. But I just needed to get away. There was so little to do in our town. I mean, nearly everything was closed. So, we packed a few things and got in the car. A twenty-hour drive and here we are!'

'Well, I'm happy for you.' Belle said, hoping she sounded it. 'What've you been doing?'

'Florida's opened up already, because they got the virus under control much faster than other states. I was able to get my hair done, and my nails. That was another reason for coming. The salons are still closed back home.'

'You're so lucky. Nearly everything's closed here,' Belle said. 'No hairdressers for at least another month, they're telling us. Not that I'd be able to go anyway.'

'And I was able to buy some new outfits as well,' Anna continued. 'I'm going shopping again tomorrow. But, how are you?'

'I'm OK. I'm still indoors, shielding – you know, because of my asthma. I'm supposed to isolate until the end of July, but they might ease that rule sooner if there's a good drop in new cases. I'm praying there will be soon.'

'I'm so sorry, Belle. Oh, I do feel so awful now, being here and having so much freedom when you're stuck indoors all this time.'

'I'm really jealous, Anna,' Belle said. 'But at least I know I'm safe here at home. I'm not in contact with anyone and I'm very careful about handling everything that's delivered. You know, wearing gloves and washing my hands.'

'But how do you pass the time?' Anna asked. 'You must be so bored!'

'It isn't easy. I can't bear to put the TV on anymore. I don't even listen to the news – the BBC talk about nothing but the virus from morning till night. Luckily, I'd plenty of books I hadn't read but I'll run out soon. There really isn't much else to do. I'm done with Facebook – everyone just bitching at everyone else – so depressing! At the start I called lots of people – now I don't. What is there to talk about? I see no-one. I've been nowhere.'

'Belle, darling, I've just realized how lucky I am to have so much space at home. And you're in that one-bed apartment, with that tiny yard that isn't even big enough to walk around. Oh, you poor thing!'

Belle's index finger hovered over the red hang-up button on her screen. The button shimmered as she tried to see it through the tears that suddenly pricked her eyes. She touched it lightly and ended the call. Wiping her tears, she grabbed her phone and sent Anna a text. *Sorry, sis. My battery died. Will talk to u soon.* She turned on the TV and found the BBC News channel. There just *might* be some news about easing the regulations on shielding.

Mairead Breen

Mirror

Looking out my rear-view
mirror,
I see you,
A memory gone,
I refuse to accept the
missed dreams.

By the point of rescue,
I never win,
I fall silent again,
Never meant to hurt you.

Things just got in the
way,

My actions hurt you,
That I am sorry for,
Am just a number in a
crowd.

Alison Black



Morning Sun

Wherever I may wander in the loneliness of the early sun
This life it does stay true to everything and everyone.
Good tidings and bad tidings,
wherever it may run
as the echoes bounce and fall at the rising of the sun.

A solitary little bird sits
up upon a wire
and basks in the glory of the upcoming light
as the morning catches fire
bidding farewell to the long and lonely night.



I remember at a distance all the characters who have gone to Grace
who helped mould my life with a rustic web spun of old tales, yarns and
lace.

And my grandmother's cottage, sitting around the hearth
with the crane drawn at a quarter and the aroma stirring forth.

The floor tiles of red and black resting on the ground.
They have seen many a happy visitor and many a mourning shroud.
What tales could they relay had they only voice,
and the history of this room and its people, had they only choice?



Standing on the Mountain and not far from where the cairn sits
the view rolls on and a jigsaw lies before me
and the beauty of the landscape has a natural fit.

The mishappen fields and roaming streams
and all its beauty within,
autumn hills and the old roads stretching in between
and trees of all kinds scattered all around.

Here, wherever I may wander in the loneliness of the early sun
this life does stay true to everything and everyone.



Joe McCoy

The Halifax Foundation : Help for the Community

Halifax in partnership with **We Are Digital**, have launched a Digital Helpline to give practical advice and support with getting online during this unprecedented time.

This is a free, telephone-based service and offers help with tasks such as how to bank online, as well as helping to access essential services online such as food shopping, making GP appointments and staying in touch with friends and family.

If you know you might benefit from this service, you can contact We are Digital on the phone number - 0345 222 0333. Lines are open Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm. **To avail of this service, it is important to say that you are accessing it through MHS Heritage & Culture Ltd.**

Many people struggle to access the Internet and turn on a device by themselves. Lloyds Bank want to make sure people, communities and businesses are supported during this crisis. We have heard first-hand from a We Are Digital Agent just what a difference this service can make. *'I didn't think anyone would ever have the patience to explain things over the phone which Madeleine the trainer did. I hope other people get as much out of this as I have, it's amazing.'* Testimony from Mrs F (80, Eastbourne).

Please note that **We Are Digital** do not have access to banking systems **will not** ask you to provide any confidential information, like your bank account details, passwords or PINs.

General Notes:

We are continuing work on our website and will soon be re-launching our new improved version making it easier to negotiate and incorporating newer features.



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