



WINNERS

Category 1 – Best Rescue of a Historic Building

This award recognised volunteers and professionals, individuals and groups who have rescued a historic building.

Heritage Angel: Bill Wolsey

Project: The Dirty Onion, Belfast

The 'Dirty Onion' is a former warehouse that traded everything from fish and tea to tinned soup, linen, whiskey and much more. It is B listed and is Belfast's oldest intact timber-framed building, dating back to the late 17th Century. It sits within the Cathedral Quarter Conservation Area in Belfast, a location that has seen much progress in recent years by way of heritage-led regeneration. The warehouse had lain empty for a number of decades, as consecutive owners considered the balance between its creative reuse and the challenges associated with its protection and retention of important historic fabric. Bill Wolsey had a vision that would not only bring the building back into use, but give it a thriving social and commercial future. Bill has been responsible for restoring some of Belfast's most important historic buildings, regenerating buildings at risk, bringing them back to life. The key objective of this project was to create one of the most beautiful and authentic bars in Ireland, with a strong association with Irish music, art and culture. The heritage value of the building was seen to be the perfect draw. The project involved removing unsympathetic additions to expose its original beams, treating the wood to protect it. Modern interventions were slotted in with minimal damage to the rear of the remaining historic structure. The building has now become a unique and popular bar and restaurant. Heritage-led regeneration projects, like the Dirty Onion, have changed the Cathedral Quarter area and contributed to its growth.

Category 2 – Best Contribution to a Heritage Project by Young People

This award will recognised the contribution to heritage projects by young people up to the age of 25.

Heritage Angel: Tom Meharg

Project: Belfast Hills Community Archaeology Dig

The Belfast Hills Partnership held a Community Archaeology Dig on Divis Mountain, Belfast, focusing on a stone enclosure originally thought to be an Early Christian Cashel. The dig was held over two weeks and involved approx. 400 school children, a public open day, public training days and a walk and talk event. No Early Christian remains were uncovered causing the archaeologists to rethink dating of the site. Neolithic remains and early Victorian artefacts were found by participants, indicating that the site is much older than anticipated, and had a period of more recent use. Tom Meharg, an Archaeology student, volunteered to work on the project and share his knowledge and experience with the participating groups. Tom played a key part in making the Belfast Hills Community Dig a success. The aim of the project was to bring the past to life through archaeology and creative engagement. Tom got stuck right in, ensuring all equipment was where it needed to be for the school children, leading workshops with school groups, providing radio interviews, undertaking a flint knapping exhibition for the general public, giving generously of his time with individual

visitors who wanted to see finds uncovered from the site. Tom often had to be reminded that he needed to take a break, as he was so busy on site helping everyone else!

Category 3 – Best Craftsmanship or Apprentice on a Heritage Rescue or Repair Project

This award will recognise a volunteer, professional individual or apprentice who has demonstrated the application of craft skills that have been key in repairing or rescuing a historic site.

Heritage Angel: Chris Balmer (conservation blacksmith), George Irwin (conservation joiner) and Kieran Loughran (conservation joiner)
Project: Ballycopeland Windmill Conservation Project

Ballycopeland Windmill is an iconic monument and architectural feature in County Down. It is the last remaining windmill in Northern Ireland that has its original internal mechanism still intact, along with the complex of buildings associated with it, which includes the miller's cottage, kiln, drying floor and kilnman's house. The project involved completing specialist conservation works, therefore, required specialist craft workmanship in the fields of conservation, blacksmithing and joinery. The three craftsmen, Chris, George and Kieran, were responsible for a range of restoration tasks, including removing the sails and fantail and constructing the new sails to a historically accurate design. They also repaired the roller reefing system, making Ballycopeland Windmill the only remaining windmill in the world that still has this patented system in working order, raising the site to international significance. The project not only focused on conservation work but also combined public outreach and engagement. This was achieved by a series of conservation showcases and opening the tower to the public on specified days. The project has resulted in this monument being saved for generations to come, reinstating the correct historical aesthetic of the tower for the first time since the 1930s.

Category 4 – Best Rescue, Recording or Interpretation of Historic Place

This award recognises volunteers and professionals, individuals and groups who rescue, record or interpret any kind of historic place.

Heritage Angel: Bellanaleck Local History Group
Project: A unique experiment: the resettlement of eleven WW1 ex-servicemen on Cleenish Island, Upper Lough Erne

Irish soldiers who would make it home from the trenches of World War One were promised 'a piece of their motherland' by Lord French as part of a recruitment drive in 1918. One of the most extraordinary resettlement schemes was on Cleenish Island. Eleven holdings, ranging between 26 and 42 acres and each with a stone-built farmhouse, were provided on the island to help men who had experienced the war at first hand settle back into civilian life. The island had no infrastructure and was only accessible by boat. Today, most of the stone houses lie abandoned decaying and at risk, amongst fields of grazing cattle. Bellanaleck Local History Group's project allowed them to pursue their interest in uncovering Cleenish Island's links with WWI. They focused on the story of eleven survivors of WWI who were settled there, piecing together accounts of their war experiences and the impact this had on their lives, adding to the challenge of making a financial success of holdings in such a remote location. The group have gathered valuable oral histories and discovered extensive archive material. Workshops were held to upskill the group including digital photography, genealogy and audio recording. A large community event was held which included a tour of the houses and culminated in the planting of a commemorative tree. An exhibition was mounted in the local hall to showcase their findings. An extensive pictorial record of the houses was created. A narrative film about the project was commissioned and screened. An

interactive online Storymap of the project has been prepared in collaboration with CAF at Queens. A summation of the project has been achieved with the publication of a fully illustrated book entitled 'Making it Home'.

Public Vote – Sebastian Graham, Mills of Northern Ireland

The Mills of Northern Ireland project consists of the development of an online resource which maps over 3,200 mills of various types across Northern Ireland. The website, www.millssofarthernireland.com, has been developed solely by Sebastian Graham without any external funding, using a range of source materials available via the Public Records Office, N.I. and local historical records and maps. Following his employment as a National Trust guide in Wellbrook Beetling Mill, Sebastian developed an interest in combining modern information technology and historical records to improve recording and interpretation of mill sites and buildings. He recognised the desire from many local and overseas visitors to be able to access information on mills and local connections to history. This led him to develop a website to map mills and their history. Sebastian, has in his own time, also carried out extensive site visits to historic mills and industrial sites, and has interviewed many local people about their local significance and stories. The aims and objectives of the project changed and modified as it progressed. Initially it was intended to gather information about mills solely in the vicinity of Cookstown, however, it then grew to include a much wider geographical focus, across Northern Ireland. Sebastian has received regular requests to conduct talks and presentations on the subject. Until the development of this resource, much of the information about this topic was not readily available to the general public. Through this project many more people are able to access and learn from the online resource and explore an enriched, permanent record of mill heritage in Northern Ireland.

Lifetime Achievement Award

Dr Fred Hamond, Industrial Archaeologist

Fred Hamond is a Belfast-based industrial archaeologist working throughout Ireland. His work entails everything from identifying and recording industrial buildings and structures through to their evaluation and restoration to full working order.

In the context of society's development over the past 10,000 years, the last 250 have been particularly formative. During this period, industry has played a key role in our social and economic development and also in shaping our urban and rural landscapes.

The legacy of these past industries takes many forms - extractive industries (e.g. mines and quarries), manufacturing industries (e.g. corn mills and distilleries), service industries (water, gas and electricity), and transport links (roads, rail and canals).

Whilst there are obviously many facets to our built heritage, it's particularly important to preserve significant examples of the industrial heritage to illustrate milestones in our past.

