

Moving Song

Promenade performance by Belfast City Choir at Culture Night Belfast 2013.

Scores for multiple performers in yellow ponchos.

One performer is Leader.

Leader directs the group with yellow umbrella.

Leader guides the groups through the route shown on the map below.

The red balloons mark the songs in the Moving Song Songbook



The following notes on architecture and history may be read in fragments by the Leader.
The Leader can repeat and loop words and phrases to encourage echoing amongst the group.

Cathedral Quarter

Take a wander a few streets back from the main shopping thoroughfare of Royal Avenue and you'll find yourself in the birthplace of the city. The area we know today as the Cathedral Quarter began its establishment right from the birth of the Belfast City in 1613. From this map dating back to 1690 we can see the North Gate and it is this street that is known as North Street. The Belfast River which would have run from the River Lagan down to Millgate now flows under High Street.

James I gave the settlement of Belfast to Sir Arthur Chichester and it became a town by the grant of a royal charter in 1613. As you can see from this Phillips map, High Street, North Street and Waring Street can be traced over this 17th century street pattern. Sir Arthur Chichester built himself a grand fortified manor in the area of what is now known as Cornmarket. This was completely destroyed in a disastrous fire of 1708. Old Belfast had narrow property plots, with long gardens to the rear. Some of the access lanes became 'entries' and in some places you can still see this pattern of development.

Charles Lanyon

Belfast's most famous and prolific architect, Lanyon and his partner John Lynn were responsible for the architectural set piece at Queen's University, University Road. He was architect for many of the city's finest buildings, including the Assembly's College, Botanic Avenue, the Custom House, Custom House Square, Crumlin Road gaol and courthouse and Sinclair Seamen's Presbyterian Church, Corporation Street.

Toward an Architecture

How should we be living together?
This may be a time to stop doing and start thinking
We know that places matter. Human beings live in places. We are always somewhere.
Not to be in a place is to be nowhere, and to be nowhere is to be nothing.
"placelessness"
an increasing loss of local character
There is a place for uniformity and similarity, but not everywhere.
we hardly need real places in which to meet one another
we need no art of architecture
if all places were alike how would we know where we were?
all fixed, fast-frozen relationships are swept away ... all that is solid melts into air.
it is the future with which we are principally concerned.
pay attention to the forms in which the locals build for they are the fruits of wisdom gleaned from the past
the idea of an Ulster, because it is rooted in prehistory and topography, in geography and weather, predates any concept of nation and even of peoples.
anyone who is trying to do anything, is constantly looking over the shoulder.
selective quotation
'somewhere else' that we regard as the enemy
we might do better to look at what we have now
we should pay more and closer attention to the place we are in.
an unfinished projects
Ulster lacks the deep beds
the deepest rocks are deformed
making the very best of difficult circumstances
the idea of common land and the right to roam is largely absent
there can be no politics of space independent of social relations
these communal spaces exist, but they are not communal to all.
arenas of contest
inclusive of all.
how is the world to be pictured?
We do not have the thought and then speak;
we find the thought in searching for the right words or in drawing the right lines;
and we do not know they are right until they have been executed.

it is as well to remember that everyone, everywhere is a settler.
very ancient precedents
you can and should do what you like on your own land.
there is very little sense of communal responsibility or communal tradition
and it ought to be a matter of general shame
the centre of Belfast is more varied and less 'placeless' than most British cities
choose a future
unrestricted consumption, increasing personal debt,
expanding mobility
give each other shelter and security
surrounded by walls.
whose intention?
'containable' space
'our space', 'their space'
public spaces have become smaller and less open to chance meetings
streets can embody a mentality
hidden behind physical boundaries
an index of civil failure
horrid inevitability
Today's suburb is tomorrow's slum
buy our grandchildren out of the consequences of our present actions and policies.
a parody of 'traditional values'
the idea of the picturesque
good neighbours do not shout or behave crudely toward one another.
what is already there and already good
the great art of living together
Good manners are one key to a good civil life
it has to be done by ourselves.
we are not elsewhere
we are here
'building our own authenticity'
between an unavoidable here and the intrusive there.
if we do not feel we are being pulled apart, then we are not alive today.
if we can't - or don't - get it right then we are probably continuing to fail through failing to ask the right questions of ourselves.
we are trying to pay attention to where we are.

Hill St

Originally called Pot-house Lane, after a pottery works situated here, Hill Street has been the focus of public realm works by Laganside Corporation. The area behind Donegall Street and Waring Street was a warren of crooked alleyways, courts and lanes, containing the oldest and poorest residential quarter of town. Much of the housing was cleared and the area was given over to stores and, in particular, bonded warehouses. The Environment and Heritage Service: Built Heritage (which looks after monuments and listed buildings in Northern Ireland) is based at number 5-33, in the converted warehouse built for the Bushmills Distillery in 1885. The stucco warehouse opposite was converted into a performance venue in 2006 -

the Black Box. The Black Box has proved extremely popular and hosts a wide range of events from music, drama, readings and lectures.

Todd Architects carved their offices from a 1920s jute sack warehouse, showing confidence in the area in the late 1980s, as did Nick's Warehouse Restaurant. A solid ten bay red brick warehouse dating from 1905 spans numbers 42 to 52. The small warehouse located at the end of Hill Street was built in 1910 and has distinctive Diocletian windows.

Gordon St

This early route off Hill Street was occupied by coopers and publicans and was probably named after **John Gordon**, an agent of Lord Donegall.

Belfast Community Circus School moved to Gordon Street in 1999.

OhYeah, a dedicated music centre with recording space for local bands and providing support for young musicians, opened at number 15-21 in 2006.

Waring Street

Now one of Belfast's most vibrant weekend thoroughfares, teeming with trendy bars and places to eat, this historic street has a particular connection with one of Ireland's greatest writers. In 1695 Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) was ordained as a Church of Ireland minister in Kilroot, near Carrickfergus. He promptly fell in love with Jayne Waring, daughter of William Waring, the tanner from whom the street takes its name. He christened his intended 'Varina' and spent most of his time here trying to persuade the reluctant Miss Jayne to promise herself to him, as well as beginning *A Tale of a Tub*, his first great satire. Jayne's reluctance eventually compelled him to return to England after two years. Residence in Dublin, and his greatest literary works, followed, but Belfast folklore has it that Cave Hill, which towers like a sleeping giant above the city, provided the inspiration for the giants in *Gulliver's Travels*.

This street appeared on the maps of 1680 and 1685. Then called Broad Street, it was renamed Waring Street after the tanner **William Waring**. It had become the trading centre of Belfast by the mid 19th century and a busy commercial street, containing milliners, tailors, estate agents, shipping agents, stationers, solicitors and printers. In 1840, five out of six fish merchants listed in the street directory were in Waring Street. Sugar refining premises were opened by **George McCartney** and by 1683 sixty tons of sugar were being processed each year. Sugarhouse Entry is the only remnant of the older street pattern between High Street and Waring Street.

The Commercial Buildings 1819-22 Listed

Built by public subscription, the Commercial Buildings were designed by **John McCutcheon** to provide "an excellent commercial hotel, a spacious and handsome newsroom and a piazza for the use of merchants".

The three-storey classical building effectively closes the vista from Donegall Street. Built from grey Dublin granite, it has five central bays enclosed in giant order Ionic engaged columns. On a bright day see how the stone sparkles.

The Northern Whig newspaper (founded by **Francis Dalzell Finlay** in 1824) was reeled off here from 1921 to 1963. The derelict building was rescued in the 1990s by Clanmil Housing Association and now houses its offices, the Northern Whig bar and a host of arts organisations.

Assembly Rooms

New ideas must use old buildings.

Historic buildings are for all of us. How many gorgeous building are there about the city that are left empty and unused? So much potential in some of Belfast's biggest architectural and cultural resources remains untapped. One of our favourites and one of the most significant buildings in Belfast's long and colourful history are the Assembly Rooms (Bank Building) at the end of Bridge Street. Whenever we've opened it up to you on Culture Night, the response has been overwhelmingly positive – and the feeling is that it is a neglected jewel in our city's architectural crown.

We propose to campaign to have The Assembly Rooms opened up to the public all year round – and pledge to support any arts or civic or community organisation that can enable that to happen.

The former Northern Bank at the Four Corners on Waring Street is perhaps Belfast's most significant historic building. Known variously as the Assembly Rooms and the Old Exchange, this space was central to trade as a market exchange for centuries; then as a place of assembly, acting as our first city hall; a courthouse (Henry Joy McCracken was tried here); the end to slave ships entering Belfast was promulgated here; Belfast's first music society met here and the first Carolan Harp festival took place here. Leading 18th and 19th century architects Charles Lanyon, Robert Taylor and WH Lynn all had a hand in its design and redevelopment over the years. From its steps, every milestone was measured. Now, with its Grade B Listed Interior and unique cathedral timbered roof, it languishes, vacant and at risk from further vandalism and dereliction, waiting for rescue..

As Conor says, "*this building represents everything that Belfast could be but fails to achieve*".

There is no arguing this building is so prominent in the make up of our city. Yet we only given the privilege of experiencing it on Culture Night were it is transformed into a theatre, a studio, a gallery, a debate hall and whatever else we can think of! It is such a shame that we don't have access to this space all year round, imagine what we could do with it!

One of the oldest public buildings in Belfast, the first floor assembly rooms were added in 1776 to the 1769 single storey market house. Many famous events were held here, including an influential festival of Irish harpists in 1792. Local United Irishman leader Henry Joy McCracken attended that festival with the leader of the revolutionary group, Wolfe Tone. Just six years later McCracken was condemned to death in the same building. It was converted to a bank in 1845 by Sir Charles Lanyon. All milestones out of Belfast were once measured from here.

The Exchange and Assembly Rooms acquired its name through its function as a building. It was originally built as a one-storey market with arcade in 1769, known as 'The Exchange'. In 1776 Lord Donegall commissioned Sir Robert Taylor to design a two-storey building for social gatherings and dances, when the building then became known as 'The Assembly Rooms'. Fashionable society immediately began referring to the area of Bridge Street, North Street, Waring Street, and Rosemary Lane as 'The Four Corners'. After the 1798 rebellion, the Assembly Rooms served as a trial room for Henry Joy McCracken of the United Irishmen (he was subsequently hung at High Street). In 1845 Sir Charles Lanyon won the commission to convert the Assembly Rooms to the present day structure for Northern Bank. Today the building is in disuse, with much lobbying to use the venue as an exhibition hall or theatre.

This building began life as a single-storey arcaded market-house in 1769, making it Belfast's oldest public building. Known as the Four Corners, at one time all milestones out of Belfast were measured from here. In 1776, Lord Donegall asked London architect, **Robert Taylor** to add 'spacious and elegant' Assembly Rooms on the first floor. These witnessed the famous Harp Festival of July 1792. Converted to a bank by **Charles Lanyon** in 1845 who faced it in Italianate stucco, Taylor's interior was then lost through **William Lynn's** refurbishments of 1895. Following the bank's closure the space has been used to dramatic effect by **Tinderbox Theatre Company**. This lynchpin building is now in search of a secure future, in common with other listed banks in the city centre.

High St

*"Belfast is quite a decent city.
The river run down high street and the choir boys would be out with the fishing rods.
In between the stones was just soil and you played marleys.
They changed it then and put in concrete."*

This was Belfast's main street, usually called Front Street or Fore Street in the seventeenth century. The open river Farset flowed down the middle until the mid-1800s. The name Belfast comes from the Irish, Beal Feirste –

'mouth of the Farset'. Bridges once spanned the river at Church Lane, Skipper Street and Bridge Street. On maps of 1680 and 1685, the street took the form of quays on both sides of the river, crossed by a series of small bridges. A market for butter, hides and tallow was held here by 1694. It was called Front Street at the time and Ann Street was called Back Street. Famous residents of High Street included **Sir James Murray**, who invented Milk of Magnesia, and the McCracken family, the best known of whom was United Irishman, **Henry Joy McCracken**. He was executed at the Market House in 1798. The poet **Sir Samuel Ferguson** was born in High Street.

St George's Church, High Street 1811-16 Listed

John Bowden of Dublin designed the two-storey classical church, built as a chapel for St. Anne's parish church (demolished to make way for the Cathedral). It is built on the site of the Chapel of the Ford, where travellers could give thanks for the safe crossing of the Farset. This sandstone church has Corinthian columns and a portico which came from the Earl Bishop of Derry's unfinished 1788 house near Castledawson, bought by the Bishop of Down and transported on the Lagan Canal. The pediment has two badges in the centre above oak leaf garlands, one of bishop's keys and one of the Belfast coat of arms. High Street was the main commercial and retail thoroughfare until the focus shifted to Royal Avenue. The modern buildings on the corner of Bridge Street were developed to fill in damage caused by the 1941 Blitz.

The National Bank c 1890 Listed

Designed by **William Batt**, this was one of the few buildings in the street to survive the 1941 Blitz. C.E.B. Brett paints the picture: "it reared its five proud storeys above a sea of debris". This survival is due to the fact that its front wall, floors, chimneys and roof were constructed using concrete. The building will be converted into a hotel and tea rooms.

St George's Buildings 1881 Listed

In 1910 number 43 was home to the Ulster Overcoat Company which produced the 'Ulster Overcoat', made famous by Sherlock Holmes and Billy Connolly. St George's Hall served as Belfast's first full-time cinema, showing 'Bluebeard' to an audience of 1500 in 1908.

Transport House 1959 Listed

The International Style building by **J.J. Brennan** displays a highly distinctive coloured tile mural containing an airplane, ship, cranes, factory and marching workers, and is one of the youngest listed buildings in Northern Ireland. Transport House is soon to be restored by UNITE. Headquarters of the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union, it became an important focus for the trade union movement. Built over what Jonathan Bardon described as the "decaying and evil-smelling docks", **Victoria Street** was created in 1843 and named following the Queen's visit in 1849.

Bridge St

Bridge Street was named after the stone bridge which crossed the High Street. **Patrick Neill**, a Glasgow printer, settled in Belfast in the 1690s and brought with him his brother-in-law, **James Blow**. Blow published the first Bible in Ireland in 1704. **Francis Joy** founded the Belfast News Letter here in 1737 at “the sign of the Peacock”. This area was badly blitzed during the war and was redeveloped in the 1950s. Compare the buildings on both sides of Bridge Street. **Young and Mackenzie** were responsible for both the listed neo-Georgian group and the Festival of Britain block, with its radar inspired railings.

The Royal Exchange

My fear is that the regeneration will turn into the gentrification of the cathedral quarter.

The Royal Exchange development includes approximately 50,000 square metres of new retail floorspace – almost half of which will be housed within a single ‘anchor store’ – cafes/bars, a 25 bedroom hotel, over 200 apartments, offices, a new cultural arts centre, car parking for 1066 vehicles and new public spaces.

The mix of retail, arts and leisure facilities will create a new vibrant environment beyond normal shopping hours. This will further establish Northern Ireland’s capital as a major European regional city that will attract more visitors, further develop the evening economy and provide city centre living.

The development, which will involve the demolition of a number of existing buildings, will also include works to restore listed buildings and facades – including reinstatement of the North Street Arcade rotunda and its facades. The proposal also brings back to use the Northern Bank building on Bridge Street which is Belfast’s oldest public building.

Royal Exchange is a mixed use redevelopment of the North East Quarter of Belfast City Centre. A proposal to redevelop this area of the city centre dates back to the 1990’s. Since this time Ewart Properties have been purchasing land and properties in the area.

Whilst the future economic investment and job creation and the potential for new retailers and leisure providers to the Northern Ireland market place is welcomed by some, there are others with concerns for the viability, design and impact of the project.

The project was conceived before the University of Ulster began to plan for an expansion at York Street. Currently Royal Exchange is designed to cater for a greater footfall from Royal Avenue. There is concern that the historic Donegall Street will become a dead service street as the service yard and service doors for the anchor tenant dominate one side. Concerns have

also been raised that the basement car park entrance in Writers Square opposite the front of St Anne’s Cathedral would be disastrous for the areas amenity and could cause trouble for any future plans to soften the impact of York Street outside the University’s entrance.

Garfield St

Lower Garfield Street was known as the Curved Entry until 1910 until it was named after the US President James Garfield. The curved red brick building was built in 1896 by Graeme, Watt and Tullock. The curved red brick building was once occupied by a **ballroom**, many shops and the Garfield Bar, but today, all that remains is the Tivoli barber shop.

Writers’ Square

Donegall Street, Cathedral Quarter

A mere hundred yards away from the John Hewitt, and opposite the imposing St. Anne’s Cathedral, Writers’ Square is a rather sparse plaza, popular mainly with local skateboarders. Look closely at the ground, however, and you’ll see quotations from 27 Northern Irish authors inscribed in the paving across the square, including poets Louis MacNeice and John Hewitt, novelist C.S. Lewis and playwright Stewart Parker. Sam Hanna Bell (1909-1990), author of *December Bride*, one of the finest Northern Irish novels, is also commemorated. The novel tells the story of a love triangle in the Ulster countryside, and was later (1990) made into a well-received film starring Saskia Reeves and Donal McCann. Bell was a radio features producer at BBC Northern Ireland for many years. From the corner of the Square you can see the fine exterior of Belfast Central Library.

Selected reading: **Sam Hanna Bell**, *December Bride* (1951. Blackstaff Press, 1990)

“Writers’ Square has the potential to become a hugely exciting and high profile performance space for the area, as illustrated by performances during the stunning Festival of Fools organised by Belfast Community Circus School.”

Heather Floyd, Community Arts Forum

The Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival takes place in May each year and some great performances have taken place on Writers’ Square. Street performers have dazzled here skipping over quotations about Belfast’s famous writers carved into the stone underfoot.

The John Hewitt Bar

Owned by the Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre, this bar is named after the Belfast poet John Hewitt (1907-1987), a lifelong socialist and one of the most

important Northern Irish poets of the twentieth century. Born in North Belfast (see no. 6 below) and later connected to Methodist College, the Ulster Museum and Queen's in the south of the city, Hewitt maintained a lifelong attachment to the distinctive culture of Northern Ireland, articulating it in a series of books and studies. He was also a respected art critic. Opened in 1999, the bar celebrates Hewitt's socialist legacy, and is also a lively venue for readings, exhibitions and music.

Selected reading: **Frank Ormsby** ed. *The Collected Poems of John Hewitt* (Blackstaff Press, 1991)

This building once housed the printing machinery for the **News Letter** and is now a hot bed for cultural debate. The bar is run by the Belfast Unemployed Centre and hosts numerous art exhibitions, traditional music sessions and cultural events including the annual Open House Traditional Arts Festival.