

DERRY CITY AND STRABANE
DISTRICT COUNCIL PRESENTS

ISLAND VOICES 2026

Northbound

Perspectives on the
languages of Ulster

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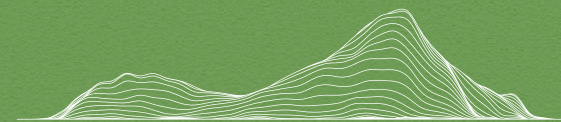
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ISLAND VOICES 2026

Northbound

Perspectives on the languages of Ulster

Derry City and Strabane District Council presents
'Northbound: Perspectives on the Languages of Ulster' a
three-part series exploring the shared linguistic heritage
of Ulster.

Featuring talks by Donal McAnallen, Ciarán Dunbar
and Dr Jennifer Orr, Northbound offers audiences fresh
insights into our shared language traditions, revealing
how language continues to shape our sense of identity,
place and belonging.

/ Booking is essential:

Please book your place by contacting
T: (028) 71 376 579 or
email: languages@derrystrabane.com

/ Admission Free

/ Light refreshments from 12:30pm before each talk.

Join us

www.derrystrabane.com/islandvoices

HERE
FOR ARTS
& CULTURE
IN DERRY & STRABANE



Derry City & Strabane
District Council
**Good
Relations
Programme**

T:buc
Changing for the better, together

Reawakening the Legacy of G. B. Adams (1917-81) at Cultra: Ulster's Dialect Curator, Lexicographer and Virtual Commissioner

Donal McAnallen

**Thursday 24 September 2026, 1 pm
Whittaker Suite, Guildhall**

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Brendan Adams was a leading expert on Ulster speech for over three decades. This presentation will discuss how, as an amateur polyglot, he piloted an Ulster dialect dictionary project in the early 1950s, and his phonological research and networking came to underpin the intangible heritage of the nascent Ulster Folk Museum, where he was appointed Curator of its Dialect Archive in the early 1960s.

His collection, *Ulster Dialects* (1964) epitomised his balanced and bipartisan advocacy for Irish, Ulster Scots and Hiberno-English. Examples of his pioneering work in tape-recording Ulster accents, and resulting all-Ireland projects, will be showcased. Finally, it will be explained how his legacy, having waned posthumously, has served to inspire a revival in the language archives at Cultra in recent years.



Donal McAnallen



Thursday

24
SEPT

About the speaker:

Dónal McAnallen is the Library and Archives Manager for National Museums NI. In this role he is custodian of an extensive range of collections at Cultra, including the museums' Sound Archive which features many oral history recordings in Irish, Manx and numerous dialects; the Harland & Wolff Ship Plans Archive; and the Ulster Language and Dialect Archive that was developed by original curator G. B. Adams in the 1960s-80s period. Leading the organisation's Languages of Ulster programme, Dónal has authored two trail booklets for the Ulster Folk Museum: *Cúl Trá-il*, which examines the history of the Irish language in Ulster through the prism of the museum buildings; and, with Frank Ferguson, *Rhymin Rab's Ramble*, which explores the life and writings of Ulster-Scots poet Robert Huddleston.

/ Admission Free

/ Light refreshments from 12:30pm before each talk.

Basic Rathlin Irish: Appreciating, Learning and Reconstructing a Lost Dialect

Ciarán Dunbar

Thursday 22 October 2026, 1pm
Whittaker Suite, Guildhall

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In this lecture, Ciarán Dunbar explores the Gaelic dialect once spoken on Rathlin Island, examining its history, decline and eventual disappearance. The speaker considers the place of Rathlin Irish within the wider story of the Irish language, asking whether it should be viewed as a linguistic artefact, a challenge to conventional understandings of the Irish-language revival, or even as an important linguistic bridge between Ireland and Scotland.

The speaker also addresses the practical question of whether it is possible to learn a dialect that no longer has native speakers and explores the role of linguistic reconstruction in that process. In doing so, this talk raises wider questions about authenticity, preservation and the extent to which a reconstructed form of speech can capture the character and richness of the original dialect.



Ciarán Dunbar



Thursday

22
OCT

About the speaker:

Ciarán Dunbar is a journalist with the Belfast Telegraph. He is also an independent writer and researcher who aims to present academic knowledge to a wider audience. He is known for his work on the dialects of east Ulster. He also writes extensively on the future of the Irish language.

/ Admission Free

/ Light refreshments from 12:30pm before each talk.

Ulster Scots Poetry of the Revolutionary period

Dr Jennifer Orr

**Monday 23 November 2026, 1pm
Whittaker Suite, Guildhall**

.....
'An' yet in spite o' a' their dow, / Auld ERIN
will yet in plenty row':

In the late 1990s Seamus Heaney wrote 'A Birl for Burns' in honour of his bardic predecessor. Written in the six line 'Burns stanza', Heaney reflects on how words like 'bummed', 'blow'd' and 'thol'd' were already familiar to him, growing up West of the Bann where 'the tongue the Ulster Scots brought wi' them / and stick to still in County Antrim/ was in my ear.' Heaney's mastery of the Scottish form, marrying Scots and Gaelic Irish rituals within the poem, acknowledges a mixed linguistic heritage that is much more complex than that of settler and native.

Two centuries before Heaney, a group of labouring-class Ulster poets negotiated their own literary voice in dialogue with a Scottish, and wider British, literary tradition, writing some of their best verse in Ulster Scots. Rediscovered in the twentieth century and named the 'rhyming weavers' by John Hewitt, poets like Samuel Thomson and James Orr are now acknowledged as Romantic innovators in their own right, working freehandedly in a bardic tradition for their own Irish subject matter.



.....
Dr Jennifer Orr



M o n d a y

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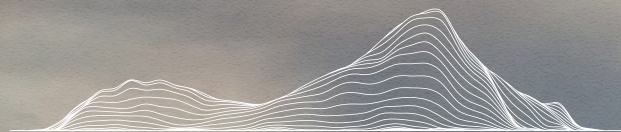
N O V

About the speaker:

Dr Jennifer Orr is Senior Lecturer in Literature at Newcastle University and a graduate of the Universities of Oxford (BA) and Glasgow (PhD). She has published on Irish and Scottish literature and history, with a specialism in the poetry and letter networks of the United Irishmen. Her most recent book *Literary Networks and Dissenting Print Culture in Ireland 1790-1815* is available from Palgrave Macmillan. She is currently writing on the Scottish poet Robert Fergusson (1750-1774) and a longer-term project on the correspondence network of Co. Down United Irishman David Bailie Warden (1772-1845) and his transatlantic letter network as American Consul to Paris.

/ Admission Free

/ Light refreshments from 12:30pm before each talk.



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Further information

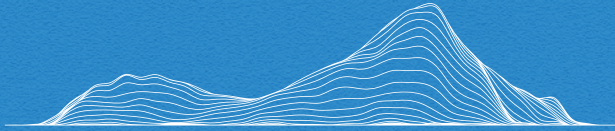
on Irish and Ulster-Scots available from

www.derrystrabane.com/gaeilge

www.derrystrabane.com/ulsterscots



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equality@derrystrabane.com
