

BELFAST STREET NAMES

May 2025
Issue 1

Early History of Rosetta

This is the second year that we have hosted an MA History student from QUB. Our 2025 intern is Paulina Sienniak, who has just completed 30 hours of work, focussing mainly on the minutes of Belfast City Council's Improvement Committee. We are very grateful to Paulina for all her hard work and also to QUB for arranging this opportunity. Here she gives us an overview of her internship and tells us about one of the highlights.

When I moved to Belfast in September, I did not expect to so quickly learn so much about the history of the city I was now living in. As an MA History student, research into the past has always been something that I was incredibly interested in, and I have loved my time working with the Belfast Street Names Project. I've gained new and useful research skills, as well as learning so much about the city of Belfast. After spending quite a few hours with my nose in the Town Improvement Committee Minutes at PRONI, I find myself telling all my friends about when streets were built, developed, or named - demonstrative of how much I have learnt in this process!

Some of the most interesting research that I was involved in was regarding the origins of streets named Rosetta. The name was most likely adopted after the name of the house that stood in that area in the early 19th Century. The initial belief was that Rosetta House first appears in newspapers in the first decade of 1811, where it is listed for sale. After this, there is very little trace of the house, let alone the trace of the people who owned it. Therefore, I turned the clock backwards, scouring the British Newspaper Archive to find further references of Rosetta. I was quickly able to find more references of the house, connecting Rosetta to Foster Coulson. The earliest mention of Rosetta appears in 1805, after Foster Coulson applied for a hunting license.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Early History of Rosetta	1
Keeping Up With The Kennedys ...	2
Happiest Street in Belfast?	2
Conundrum Corner	3
My Mother and Buttermilk Loney. 3	
Big Houses, Streets And Soccer	4

Website:

www.belfaststreetnames.com

Email:

belfaststreetnames@gmail.com



With the name of an owner, I went to PRONI to look at the records that existed there. Foster Coulson was all over the records, and I was quickly able to find a lease that was related to Rosetta. The lease dated from 1827, when the house was passed from Mr Getty to Mr Hutchinson Gardner, but the full record of owners was recorded. This lease allowed me to trace the origins of Rosetta back to 1801, when the lease was granted from the infamous Marquis of Donegall, to his brother-in-law, Sir Stephen May, before being passed to Foster Coulson in 1803. Therefore, it is likely that the house was named after the Rosetta Stone, which was discovered in 1799.

Paulina Sienniak

Keeping Up With The Kennedys

Did you know that the Kennedy Centre on Falls Road is named after businessman Hugh Kennedy, who established the supermarket Curley's in 1981? But nearby Kennedy Way was named in 1965 to commemorate US President John F Kennedy?

The Happiest Street in Belfast?

Some street names can't help bring a smile to our faces. What about Sans Souci Park in BT9 which is French for 'no worries' or 'care-free'. This street is built on the site of a grand house and gardens with the same name, which in turn may have been named after the summer palace of Frederick the Great of Prussia (1740-1786).

Fortuna Street in BT12 is named after the Roman goddess of luck so you might count your blessings if you live on this happily named street. Joy Street in BT1 is another contender for happiest name. This street is named after the Joy family who had a paper mill in the area and was developed between 1825 and 1840. Not too far from Joy Street you can find Friendly Street, Friendly Row etc. We are still researching the origin of these streets, so get in touch with any information you may have.

What Belfast Street Name makes you smile?

Lisa Rea Currie



Belfast Street Names is a registered charity

Website:

www.belfaststreetnames.com

Email:

belfaststreetnames@gmail.com

Photo credits:

Photos of talk courtesy of Neil Craigan. All other photos by Paul Tempan.



Belfast Street Names has delivered six talks to the public and community groups since the project was established just over a year ago. At the 4 Corners Festival 2025 we were joined by Linda Ervine of East Belfast Mission and singer-songwriter Brian Houston. The first AGM was held on 20th February 2025. Photos © Neil Craigan.

Conundrum Corner

Here are some odd odonyms that are keeping us awake at night. Can you help out?

Alliance Avenue (BT9) — named in 1905, which alliance could have been topical then?

Stockman's Lane (BT9) — occupation or surname?

Rochester Street (BT6) — situated near Florida Street, Delaware Street and London Street, so are we talking about Rochester, Kent, or Rochester, NY?

Union Street (BT1) — what sort of union? this name puzzled 19th century historian George Benn: “said to

have got its name from having been first opened at the time of the Union, which can scarcely be correct, as it is called Union Street in the map of 1792.”

Blythe Street (BT12) — 1876. Blythefield School is at the end. Did someone called Blythe have a field here?

Isthmus Street (BT6) — 1884, which isthmus?

Isoline Street (BT5) — what on earth? Isoline is a general term for a line connecting points with equal values on a map, so....?

My Mother and Buttermilk Loney

When my mother was in her nineties, I used to drive her round parts of Belfast which she would have known when she was young. She had lived on what is now known as the Upper Crumlin Road in the 1920s and early 1930s. Her family had moved there from Rossmore Avenue, “near the Gas Works”, in the 1920s- to get away from the “bad air”. Whether the bad air was industrial or political I was too polite to ask.

I drove up Ballysillan Park towards the Upper Crumlin Road to show her the house where she had lived when she saw ‘Buttermilk Loney’. “That’s not Buttermilk Loney! Buttermilk Loney used to be where this road is now”, she said. And she went on to tell me how she and her mother used to walk down the Loney to Holy Trinity and St Silas Church and the Oldpark Road from where one could get transport into town. She told me how they would also go to the Church on Ligoniel Road where their friends lived. This was mostly open country and farmland in those days, and sheep and hens featured in her stories.



Buttermilk Loney was a long lane that extended for several miles from the Shore Road uphill to Ligoniel. The lower end of it corresponds to Skegoneill Avenue today. The name 'Skegoneill Avenue' is first recorded in the *Belfast and province of Ulster directory, 1880*. Buttermilk Loney persisted subsequently as an unofficial name for Skegoneill Avenue for many years. The name has recently been given a new lease of life as the name of a short street in Ballysillan corresponding roughly to one of the upper stretches of the historical Buttermilk Loney. *Loney* is an Ulster Scots word meaning 'lane'.

Bernard McGuinness



Full moon rising over Skegoneill Avenue, formerly part of Buttermilk Loney

Big Houses, Streets And Soccer

There are so many Belfast streets which get their name from a big house, often one which no longer exists, but did you know that this is true of football teams too? Of the top four Belfast clubs, three are named after houses and three have grounds named after houses.

Linfield was the house of C. B. Grimshaw in 1840. The Grimshaw family helped to establish the Linfield Flax Spinning Mill in Linfield Road, off Sandy Row. In 1886 Linfield Athletic Club was formed from workers at the mill, and this developed into Linfield F.C.

The Blues' ground, Windsor Park, gets its name from a house on Malone Road, first recorded in 1858, which also accounts for Windsor Avenue, etc. However, the building featured on the club jersey is not this house, but Windsor Castle.

Cliftonville was the residence of William Herdman, first recorded in 1839. The name was inspired by the architecture of Clifton, an elegant suburb of Bristol. The house gave its name to Cliftonville Road etc. and also to Cliftonville Football and Athletic Club, founded in 1879. Since 1890 the Reds have played their home games at Solitude.

This ground is named after a house marked on the 1st edition of the Ordnance Survey six inch to the mile map in the 1840s. Solitude stood on land that was flooded shortly afterwards for the construction of Belfast Waterworks.

Glentoran (1843) was a house in Lagan Village belonging to William F. Coates, co-owner of Lagan Foundry. The house was previously called Snugbrooke. It gave its name to Glentoran Street (which no longer exists), Glentoran Place and, of course to Glentoran F.C., founded by William's son, Victor Coates in 1882.

Seaview, a house on Shore Road, was the residence of Robert Getty in 1810. It gave its name to Seaview Drive, Seaview Gardens and Seaview, the football ground of Crusaders F.C.

Paul Tempan