

### *An Ulster pilgrimage*

The urge to walk in the steps of one's heroes is ever a powerful one. CCS members on the recent Society visit to Northern Ireland had the chance to do just that – follow in the footsteps of Thomas Colby as he first surveyed Ireland in the 1820s. But the group also saw the latest developments in surveying technology, exciting architecture, inspirational artwork, historic maps and wonderful scenery – all in glorious sunshine.

The visit began at Land & Property Services' two Belfast city-centre offices where the group inspected state-of-the-art GPS receivers and rugged laptops which enable surveyors on the ground to pinpoint new buildings and update the records immediately. However, much of today's surveying is from above, rather than on, the ground and the process of planning and controlling flights and processing the resulting photographs was explained. Irish weather is notoriously fickle and the aerial survey requires clear skies; a challenge met by a contract which requires the plane to be airborne at nearby City airport within an hour.

The mapping database is updated nightly and is available publicly in an innovative website Spatial NI,<sup>1</sup> created under the auspices of EU Inspire directive. An intuitive interface lets users view OSNI mapping and create bespoke maps.

If LPS office at Lanyon Plaza is a spectacular building (see previous page), so too is PRONI,<sup>2</sup> situated in the Titanic Quarter, previously industrial dockland. Here the group, after being delighted by the artwork displayed in the atrium, was treated to a specially-assembled exhibition of historic maps, plans and documents from the collection, courtesy of Dr Glynn Kelso.

After a day in the city, the party travelled into the countryside. CCS member Keith Lilley<sup>3</sup> organised an expedition to celebrate Colby's achievements. First stop was the summit of Divis, overlooking the city, where a marker commemorates the 1825 primary triangulation point which first linked Ireland to the British mainland. Then north to Limavady to view the three remaining of the four base stations which comprised the Lough Foyle baseline<sup>4</sup> constructed in 1827/8. A memorial stands in the grounds of the Drummond Hotel, Ballykelly, near to the southernmost station.

The outward journey had been over the wild Sperrin mountains; for the return to the city the party travelled the scenic north Antrim coast road via Giant's Causeway and Dunluce Castle.

Members spent Sunday pursuing their own interests in the many attractions in and around Belfast and the surrounding countryside – and many vowed to return soon to see more.



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.spatialni.gov.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.proni.gov.uk/>

<sup>3</sup> Keith's day job is Professor of Historical Geography at Queen's University Belfast and one of his current mapping projects is on World War One, at:

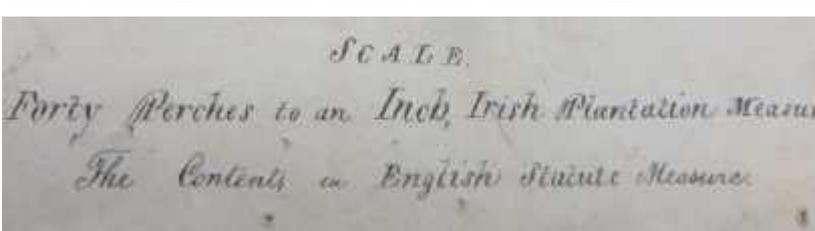
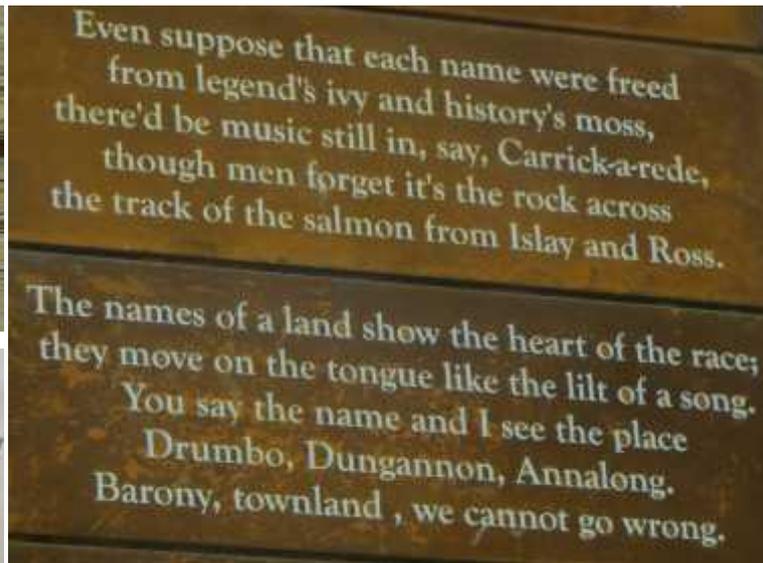
<http://www.livinglegacies1914-18.ac.uk/LearningZone/MappingtheWesternFront/>

<sup>4</sup> For more about the baseline see [http://www.charlesclosetsociety.org/files/OS\\_Limavady.pdf](http://www.charlesclosetsociety.org/files/OS_Limavady.pdf)

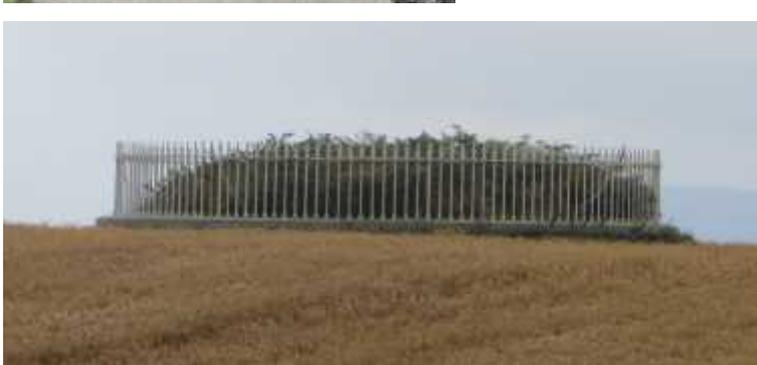


top: Historic stereo-plotter at LPS and its modern equivalent

below: PRONI, some of the artwork in the atrium and the legend from 1754 estate map



left: Gerry Zierler and Keith Lilley inspect the plaque on Divis summit above; the party at the south base station of the Lough Foyle baseline at Ballykelly



far left: the Minearny base station

left : the memorial plaque in the garden of Drummond Hotel Ballykelly