



Department for

Infrastructure

An Roinn

Bonneagair

Department for

Infrastructure

www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Councillor Dominic Molloy

Eileen.Forde@midulstercouncil.org

County Hall
Drumragh Avenue
Omagh, County Tyrone
BT79 7AF

Tel: 0300 200 7894
Text Phone: 028 9054 0022
Fax: 028 8225 4009

Your reference:
Our reference: STOF-0044-2024

19th February 2024

Dear Cllr Molloy,

FOOTPATHS THROUGHOUT THE MID ULSTER DISTRICT

Thank you for your correspondence of 31st January 2024 to the Department's Permanent Secretary, Dr Denis McMahon regarding footpaths throughout the Mid Ulster District. As this is an operational matter it has been passed to me in my role as Divisional Roads Manager to respond.

Neil Bratton, Acting Network Maintenance Manager for Western Division, has been in contact with Eileen Forde to organise a meeting with councillors to discuss general footpath maintenance in the Mid Ulster area.

Neil can be contacted at the following email address Neil.Bratton@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk.

I trust this information is useful.

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Healy
Divisional Roads Manager
Western Division

To: Council Chief Executives

**Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Belfast
BT2 7EG**

Telephone: (028) 90582 3346
e-mail: anthonycarleton@communities-ni.gov.uk
Our ref:
Date: 12 March 2024

Dear Chief Executive

Council Remote/Hybrid Meetings

My letter of 1 March 2024 refers.

Minister Lyons is committed to giving councils the flexibility to hold meetings by remote/hybrid means and will be bringing forward regulations, as soon as possible, using the powers in the Local Government (Meetings and Performance) Act (NI) 2021. The Minister considers this to be more appropriate than continuing to use powers under the Coronavirus Act 2020, which was intended as emergency legislation, and will ensure that councils will have powers for remote/hybrid meetings but based upon more regularised legislation.

A draft of the proposed regulations has been sent to the Department's solicitors for scrutiny. In order to keep the gap in legislative provision for remote meetings to a minimum, the Department, in parallel with obtaining legal scrutiny of the draft regulations, is seeking your input. A first draft of the regulations is attached for your information and comment.

The proposed regulations are very similar to the previous regulations, the Local Government (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (NI) 2020.

The Department had previously carried out a public call for evidence on remote meetings (from December 2021 to February 2022) and the responses indicated



general support for the arrangements made by the 2020 Regulations and for permanent provision on remote meetings being made.

Please examine the draft regulations and respond by 26 March 2024 with any comments you may have.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Carleton
Director
Local Government & Housing Regulation

Draft Regulation laid before the Assembly under section 2(5) of the Local Government (Meetings and Performance) Act (Northern Ireland) 2021, for approval.

DRAFT STATUTORY RULES OF NORTHERN
IRELAND

2024 No.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**The Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations
(Northern Ireland) 2024**

Made - - - - *X Month 2024*
Coming into operation - *X Month 2024*

The Department for Communities^(a) makes these Regulations in exercise of the powers conferred by section 2(1) to (4) of the Local Government (Meetings and Performance) Act (Northern Ireland) 2021^(b).

Citation, commencement and interpretation

1.—(1) These Regulations may be cited as the Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 and shall come into operation on X Month 2024.

(2) In these Regulations—

“the 2014 Act” means the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014^(c);

“council” means a district council;

“council meeting” means a meeting of—

- (a) a council;
- (b) an executive of a council (within the meaning of Part 6 of the 2014 Act);
- (c) a joint committee of two or more councils; and
- (d) a committee or sub-committee of anything within subparagraphs (a), (b) or (c).

“remote access” means the ability to attend or participate in a meeting by electronic means, including by telephone conference, video conference, live webcasts, and live interactive streaming; and

“remote attendance” is to be construed in accordance with regulation 2(2) and (3).

^(a) Formerly known as the Department for Social Development; *see* the Departments Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 c. 5 (N.I.), Article 8 of and Schedule 5 to the Departments (Transfer of Functions) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 (S.R. 2016 No. 76) transferred functions to the Department for Communities which were previously exercisable by the Department of the Environment.

^(b) 2021 c. 8 (N.I.).

^(c) 2014 c. 8 (N.I.).

Remote attendance

2.—(1) A reference in any enactment to a council meeting is not limited to a meeting of persons all of whom, or any of whom, are present in the same place and any reference to a “place” where a meeting is held, or to be held, includes reference to more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers.

(2) For the purposes of any such enactment, a member of a council (“a member in remote attendance”) attends the meeting at any time if all of the conditions in paragraph (3) are satisfied.

(3) Those conditions are that the member in remote attendance is able at that time—

- (a) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, the other members in attendance;
- (b) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, any members of the public in attendance in order to exercise a right to speak at the meeting; and
- (c) to be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public in attendance.

(4) In this regulation, any reference to a member, or a member of the public, attending a meeting or being in attendance includes that person attending by remote access.

(5) The provision made in this regulation applies notwithstanding any prohibition or other restriction contained in the standing orders or any other rules of the council governing the meeting and any such prohibition or restriction has no effect.

(6) A council must make other standing orders governing remote attendance at meetings of that council, which shall—

- (a) specify the basis or process for considering whether (including who is to assess or decide whether) district council meetings should or are to be held remotely;
- (b) govern the arrangements for and conduct of such meetings whenever such meetings are to be held remotely; and
- (c) regulate—
 - (i) the public’s access to such meetings,
 - (ii) the availability to the public of documents pertaining to such meetings,

whenever such meetings are to be held remotely.

3. In section 28(7) (overview and scrutiny committees: supplementary provision) and paragraph 9 of Schedule 5 to the 2014 Act, a reference to a person attending before a meeting includes that person attending by remote access.

4. Schedule 5 to the 2014 Act (meetings and proceedings) applies as follows—

- (a) any reference to being “present” at a meeting includes being present through remote attendance;
- (b) any reference to a “place” where a meeting is held, or is to be held, includes reference to more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers; and
- (c) in paragraph 5(1)(a) after “the offices of the council” insert “and on the council’s website”.

Decision-making

5. In sections 39 (simple majority) and 40 (qualified majority) of the 2014 Act references to “members present and voting on the decision” includes a member being present through remote attendance.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the Department for Communities on X Month 202x.

(L.S.)

Anthony Carleton
A senior officer of the Department for Communities

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Regulations)

These Regulations are made under section 2(1) to (4) of the Local Government (Meetings and Performance) Act (Northern Ireland) 2021. These Regulations make provision regarding the running of district council meetings by making amendments to the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Regulation 1 sets out preliminary matters and defines terms used in these Regulations.

Regulations 2, 3 and 4 make provision for remote attendance at council meetings by members of the council. They also require a council to make standing orders regarding the decision to hold a meeting remotely, the conducting of the meeting and access by the public.

Regulation 5 amends the governance provisions of councils to ensure that “members present and voting on the decision” includes members in remote attendance.



Police Service of Northern Ireland

Mid Ulster District
Magherafelt PSNI Station
45-49 Meeting Street
Magherafelt
BT45 6BW

Email: Michael.O'Loan@psni.police.uk
Tel: 028 90 650222

7 March 2024

Dear Mr McCreesh

CLOSURE OF POLICE SERVICE ENQUIRY OFFICES

You will be aware of the profoundly challenging budgetary situation facing the Police Service. Since he took up post, the Chief Constable has been clear about his concerns that this is affecting our ability to keep people safe.

The welcome return of the Northern Ireland Assembly has brought the allocation of additional in year funding and positive news about funding allocation for public sector pay awards but the reality is that the strategic outlook for policing remains stark. The Police budget remains insufficient and is not sustainable.

The Chief Constable has today told the Policing Board that as a consequence of the current financial and resource pressures we are facing, it has been necessary to review services and costs and to make savings in order to deliver a sustainable and effective organisation. One such service that has been subject to review is the provision of our Police Station Enquiry Offices.

As a result of an extensive review which included analysis of the volume and type of demand in enquiry offices, the decision has been taken to reduce the number of operational Enquiry Offices from 28 to 17.

Although final decisions have not been taken, it is highly likely that station(s) in this District will be affected. I am not currently in a position to make public the stations that will be affected but I will write to you again as soon as I am able to provide further detail. We are mindful of the personal impact on the staff who work tirelessly in our enquiry offices and the principle reason for the delay is to allow our contractor a reasonable amount of time to inform those staff who will be directly affected.



Police Service of Northern Ireland

It is not clear when these Enquiry Offices will close to the Public but it will likely be within three months. Transparency around this issue is crucial and the Chief Constable has been clear that further reductions in Enquiry Office provision or opening hours cannot be ruled out.

This is not a decision we have taken lightly and we are conscious there may be an actual and/or perceived loss of accessibility, visibility and ability to respond to the needs of the community. However this change will save the Police Service over £400K per year; these savings are necessary to deliver a sustainable and effective organisation.

I want to be clear that these stations are not closing. Officers and staff will continue to work from them serving the community and there will be no impact on station security. Our analysis shows that even with the reduced arrangement over 90% of households in Northern Ireland are within 15 miles of a station Enquiry Office. The average household is 10.7 miles from their nearest office (an increase of 4 miles) or 18.5 minutes by car (an increase of 1.5 minutes).

It is not our intention to cause alarm but the need for clarity and transparency on this issue is paramount. We want to be clear with you and the public about the challenges we are facing and the type of Service you can expect to see in the coming years.

Should you wish to discuss this announcement and any concerns you have please do not hesitate to get in touch with Chief Inspector Beverlie Reid or me.

I also want to be clear that the Policing team here in Mid-Ulster will continue to serve this community with professionalism. We remain committed to protecting the public in Northern Ireland to the very best of our ability.

Michael O'Loan

Michael O'Loan
District Commander



**Southern Health
and Social Care Trust**

Quality Care - for you, with you

20th February 2024

Our Ref: 18148

Private & Confidential

Councillor Dominic Molloy
Mid Ulster Council
Dungannon Office
Circular Road
Dungannon
BT71 6DT

Dear Councilor Molloy,

I refer to your letter to the Trust on 31st July 2023 in respect of issues raised at the Mid-Ulster council meeting in regards to Short Break Provision for Adults with complex needs in Woodlawn House not being a 7-day week service. Thank you for taking the time to highlight the issues and for providing me with the opportunity to address them. I apologise for the significant delay in issuing this response.

The concerns raised in the letter referred to Woodlawn House main building and pods. The 'pod' as referenced in the letter is known as Hillview. Hillview is a self-contained single bedded unit situated on the grounds of Woodlawn House. Hillview is managed and staffed by the core team in Woodlawn House. Hillview is a unit which provides bed based short breaks for individuals with behaviours that challenge and whom require a low stimulus environment.

Woodlawn House Short Break service operates seven days per week. Between April 2019 and March 2020; Hillview provided 132 overnight short breaks and Woodlawn House provided 1,750 overnight short breaks. From April 2023 – March 2024, Hillview had been allocated to provide 121 overnight short breaks and Woodlawn House allocated to provide 2,116 overnight short breaks. Regretfully, due to high demand on this service, there has been a reduction in the nights available to all service users. There was also disruption to short break services at Woodlawn House from 18th December 2023 to early January 2024 due to service pressures and unexpected staffing shortages.

Short breaks are offered continually throughout the year over a 7-day per week pattern in several other care home providers across the Trust area. The Trust continues to try and develop and grow the learning disability short break service, recognizing the necessity for meeting the needs of carers. Existing short break services are stretched with the increased demand for short breaks to support carers. All service users who use Woodlawn House and Hillview did or will have received an equitable allocation of short break nights during the period of April 2023 – March 2024. The Adult Placement Short Break Team contact all carers biannually for preferred short break dates in order to plan allocations as far as is practicable. During the allocation process, the nights requested and availability of the service is kept under review and we endeavor to offer additional nights equitably should the opportunity arise.

I hope that you will find this response has addressed the issues that you raised. However, if you are unhappy with any aspect of this response you should contact the Clinical and Social Care Governance Office on (028) 3756 0812 or email MHD.ServiceUserFeedback@southerntrust.hscni.net within 1 month of the date on this letter so that we can attempt to resolve any outstanding issues.

Yours sincerely



Jan McGall
Director of Mental Health & Disability Services
for Dr Maria O’Kane, Chief Executive

From: Farmer, Declan <Declan.Farmer@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk>
Sent: Thursday, March 14, 2024 10:53 AM
To: Councillor D Molloy <Dominic.Molloy@midulstercouncil.org>
Cc: Dfl Rivers Armagh <Rivers.Armagh@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk>
Subject: IN1-24-5337 River Blockage on Blackwater River

Our Ref: IN1-24-5337

Cllr Molloy,

RE: BLOCKAGE AT OLD RAILWAY BRIDGE ON BLACKWATER RIVER

Further to your email received in this office on the 4th March 2024 in which you reported a potential blockage on the Blackwater River downstream of Bonds Bridge at the old railway bridge. From a drainage aspect my comments are as follows:

The Blackwater River was inspected by boat on the morning of 13th March, and I can confirm that the debris at the old railway bridge support columns has been removed. The Department understands that this has been carried out by members of the public. From the drainage aspect Dfl Rivers can confirm that there is no drainage impediment at this location and no action is required by Dfl Rivers.

It should be noted that Dfl Rivers has not remit to keep watercourses open for navigational purposes nor to aid others in this endeavour. Dfl River remit is as defined by the Drainage (Northern Ireland) Order 1973.

Should you require any further information or clarification please contact me at the address below and quote the above reference number.

Regards

Declan Farmer B.Eng (Hons) M.Phil MIEI
Dfl Rivers – Operations Directorate
Armagh Area Office
44 Seagoe Industrial Estate
Craigavon
BT63 5QE



From: [chiefexecutiveoffice](#)
To: [Eileen Forde](#)
Cc: [chiefexecutiveoffice](#)
Subject: RE: Correspondence from Mid Ulster District Council - CAH Birthing pool
Date: 19 March 2024 15:03:11
Attachments: [image012.png](#)
[C038.24 CAH Birthing Pool.pdf](#)
[Response 16924.pdf](#)

Dear Ms Forde

Thank you for this query. We would like to clarify that there is a birthing pool in the delivery suite in Craigavon hospital that women can use.

Unfortunately, the works indicated in the previous response have not yet been commenced and remain outstanding at this time. The plans for the installation of the birthing pool have been more complicated than first envisaged and therefore the costs associated with these works have therefore also increased significantly which have impacted on the timeframe predicted.

We would like to assure you that the installation of a birthing pool in the midwifery led unit is considered an important aspect of midwifery led care and will remain within the planned works for the division moving forward. However, the timeframe for this at this present time is not yet confirmed.

Kind regards



Lorraine McGivern
Office Manager
The Office of the Chair and Chief Executive
Trust Head Quarters
Craigavon Area Hospital
68 Lurgan Rd
Craigavon
BT63 5QQ

Tel: 028 375 60143



Councillor Dominic Molloy

Eileen.Forde@midulstercouncil.org

County Hall
Drumragh Avenue
Omagh, County Tyrone
BT79 7AF

Tel: 0300 200 7894
Text Phone: 028 9054 0022
Fax: 028 8225 4009

Your reference: C029/24
Our reference: 167542-24

20th March 2024

Dear Dominic,

RESURFACING WORKS WITHIN THE DUNGANNON DISTRICT

Thank you for your correspondence of 29th February 2024 regarding resurfacing works within the Dungannon district.

I appreciate that the recent resurfacing works around Dungannon may have resulted in increased traffic congestion. I would like to assure you that resurfacing schemes are carefully planned by local DfI Roads staff and, as part of that planning process, a Traffic Management meeting will take place with relevant DfI Roads staff, PSNI and the contractor to identify the safest traffic management layout that causes the least disruption possible.

If deemed appropriate, works can be carried out 'off-peak', avoiding the busy morning and evening periods when traffic flows are greater. Night works are also considered where appropriate but issues regarding noise pollution means that this is not always feasible within an urban setting. The Department also strive to complete works which we know will be particularly difficult during the summer months when traffic flows are traditionally lower. Unfortunately, due to the way we are funded we often rely on 'in-year' funding to deliver many of our schemes. The consequence of this means that in order to spend the additional budget, works often must start at short notice.

Statutory utilities have a legal right to install their apparatus within the adopted road network. Following on from resurfacing works the Department can only prevent utility companies from excavating within the site boundary for 12 months. After this period

has expired, we are powerless to stop the works being undertaken. Even within the 12-month period, if the excavation is for an emergency repair or a new connection the utility has the legal right to carry out the works.

I trust you will appreciate that works of this nature, no matter how well planned, invariably will have an impact on road users and we would apologise for any inconvenience caused, but I can assure you that the needs of the general public and local businesses are considered at every stage and inconvenience kept to an absolute minimum.

I hope you find this information useful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Healy', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Daniel Healy
Divisional Roads Manager
Western Division

From: [S](#)
To:
Subject: FW: Proclamation/Social Media Post Proposal: Centenary - Master Robert's 1924 GN Win/Mid-Ulster Connection
Date: 14 March 2024 09:07:37
Attachments: [Master Robert with Bob Trudgill, Lord Airlie and Aubrey Hastings M \(1\).png](#)

Hello!

I would like to propose, for your consideration, that March 28, 2024 be proclaimed 'MASTER ROBERT DAY' in Magherafelt and Dungannon (Moy), if not the whole of the Mid-Ulster District! I further propose that the proclamations be awarded to Bryson's (Magherafelt) and Tomney's (The Moy) for their historical relationship to Master Robert, for permanent display.

I am contacting you with the hope that you might consider recognizing the centenary of Master Robert's March 28, 1924 Grand National victory on March 28 (the actual centenary date), or on or about April 13 (the date of this year's Grand National). The Grand National is the most important steeplechase in the world, since 1839. I believe this horse's local story, with Mid-Ulster roots, reinforces the event's great tradition, and should be remembered and celebrated for years to come by the people of Mid-Ulster. A proclamation on the centenary of its Grand National victory will elevate its important history for Magherafelt, Moy, and indeed - Mid-Ulster!

Master Robert was bred by Robert McKinlay in Castlefinn, Donegal, and subsequently spent time in Magherafelt (Derry) and Moy (Tyrone), before being sent to England. The horse trained at The Curragh in its early years. Pat Murray, and his wife Sarah, owned what is now Bryson's in the early twentieth century. Besides being a publican, Pat was a horseman who kept horses at his property and jumped locally as an avocation. Master Robert was pulling Pat's grocer's delivery cart. Pat and his keen eye saw potential, bought the horse from his grocer. Later, the horse spent time with horse dealer Joseph Lavery in the Moy! Of course, The Moy Square was the most significant horse dealing location in the north for a century, and Master Robert no doubt spent time in the former stables in Tomney's.

Master Robert's achievement is the consummate Grand National story - occurring when horse racing reigned supreme in the sporting world - featuring an unlikely winner (with an unlikely winning jockey) and a high-profile field of horses, jockeys, trainers and owners. It was very likely the highest-attended single-day sporting event in the world in 1924 (250,000 estimate, including King George V), and, according to British Pathe', a world-record 45 cameramen filmed the event (representing a milestone in the evolution of live event filming). Master Robert's was a record fourth (and final) Grand National victory for his trainer, Aubrey Hastings (third, if you exclude his War National win). His owner, Scotland's Lord Airlie, was close to the Royal Family, and later served as Lord Chamberlain.

I submit that Master Robert's development in Mid-Ulster, which eventually led to winning the biggest race in the world, is important history which deserves to be celebrated and preserved!

I have particular interest and knowledge with respect to Master Robert and his journey, and the 1924 Grand National, as I have recently completed a novel manuscript about the horse and its journey based on extensive research. My initial interest in Master Robert emanated from learning of my great granduncle's ownership (Pat Murray) of the horse in Ireland, a chapter in his journey to a National Hunt career. As it turns out, Master Robert's victory is an exceptionally interesting Grand National story given, among other things, the places and time period during which his journey took place, challenges along the way which made his Grand National participation and victory improbable, and his connections.

Perhaps my book will raise additional interest in Mid-Ulster, and provide yet another reason for visitation to your wonderful area!

I have taken the liberty of sharing with you further information on Master Robert and my background below. I would ask that I be credited as your source, should you use the information which is the result of my extensive research. Would appreciate it if you would provide readers the website address www.masterrobert.horse which they can explore for further information, and to keep in touch.

Feel free to reach out to me in due course if you have interest. Of course, Peter and Niall Bryson, and Barry McNeice, are also aware of their connection to Master Robert and the important history it represents..

With appreciation and best regards,
Francis X. Murray
New York, NY
I

Book Project Website: www.masterrobert.horse

Background

1924 England

“Traditionally known as ‘the sport of kings’ – and famously patronized by the House of Windsor, horse racing was also the people’s sport and that long before football acquired the appellation ... Horseracing has a powerful claim to be Britain’s leading interwar sport ... It was racing, not cricket or soccer, which really sold newspapers across Britain.”

Horseracing and the British 1919-39, Mike Huggins, 2003

“The Grand National is the world’s most sporting race.”

Time Magazine, April 7, 1924

In the early twentieth century, horse racing was Britain and the world's most popular spectator sport, and The Grand National its jewel.

Irish-Bred Master Robert Was A Longshot Winner Of 1924 Grand National

100 years ago this month (March 28), eleven-year-old Donegal-bred thoroughbred Master Robert, a 25/1 longshot, won The Grand National - "the world's greatest race" (*British Pathe*) - at Aintree Racecourse outside Liverpool, with Robert Trudgill up. Master Robert was a longshot because he battled lameness in the weeks leading up to The Grand National, and faced the past three winners of the event: Sergeant Murphy - 1923; Music Hall - 1922, and; Shaun Spadah - 1921), as well as 'the hottest favorite on record' Conjuror II (5/2) whose race ended the first time over Becher's Brook. Several of the most famous jockeys of the day had mounts, including: Jack Anthony (Music Hall); Fred Rees (Shaun Spadah); Joe Hogan Jr. (Sergeant Murphy) and Harry Brown (Conjuror II).

Trainer Was Era's Most Accomplished

Master Robert's March 28, 1924 longshot victory (25/1) marked a record fourth Grand National victory for legendary trainer Aubrey Hastings (1906 Ascetic's Silver; 1915 Ally Sloper; 1917 Ballymacad (*run on the wartime Gatwick course when the race was dubbed the War National), whose Barcelona Stables in Wroughton was the center of Britain's horse training activity in the early twentieth century and predecessor to today's Kingsclere.

Interestingly, Aubrey Hastings was the maternal great-grandfather of England-based high profile trainer Andrew Balding and his sister, presenter Claire Balding.

Co-Owners Were High-Profile / Royal Connections

The co-owners of Master Robert upon his Grand National victory were Scottish Peer Lord Airlie (Colonel David Lyulph Gore Wolseley Ogilvy, the 12th and 7th Earl of Airlie), and Major Sidney Green (son of John William Green, owner of the now-defunct Phoenix Brewery in Luton).

Lord Airlie's two family seats, Cortachy Castle and Airlie Castle in Angus, Scotland, are ten miles up the road from Glamis Castle, ancestral seat to the Earls of Strathmore. Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, daughter of the 14th Earl of Strathmore, grew up at Glamis and was a childhood friend of Lord Airlie. In 1923, she would marry Prince Albert, Duke of York (later King George VI), and would become Queen Consort in 1936 upon the abdication of Prince Albert's brother, Edward VIII. Lord Airlie served as Lord Chamberlain to his former neighbor and childhood friend between 1937-1965 (and his successor, the recently deceased 13th Earl, would serve his childhood friend, the late Queen Elizabeth, in the same capacity 1984-1997). Clementine Churchill (Winston's wife), was first cousin to the 12th Earl of Airlie.

Jockey Was Unattached Journeyman; Injured The Day Before

Master Robert's regular jockey refused the ride, because of Master Robert's lameness. No fashionable rider would take the ride. Bob Trudgill was a journeyman jockey, unattached to a stable, who was never in position to turn down

a ride. The day before The Grand National, in a race at Aintree, Trudgill was thrown from his mount, Charlie Wise, and injured. Despite doctor's orders not to ride, Trudgill would not be denied his opportunity. *"No other jockey but Trudgill would have won on Master Robert. It might also be said that Trudgill would not have been given the opportunity of winning on any other. For horse and jockey, it was time and place and partner all together."* (The Grand National, Con O'Leary, 1945) Bob Trudgill's Master Robert-winning saddle is currently on display at Aintree for all to see.

Photos And Video

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. Attached please find a wonderful photo from my collection of Master Robert entering the winner's circle after his unexpected victory, with Bob Trudgill up, being led by Lord Airlie, with Aubrey Hastings to the right smiling. This is an actual photograph from a 1924-era scrapbook I own, for which no photographer is identified. If you would like to publish/display this photo, I would request credit as follows: "From the collection of Francis X. Murray. Used with permission. For more information, please visit www.masterrobert.horse".

I've also provided photos of cigarette cards for both Master Robert (issued by John Player in 1933) and Robert Trudgill (issued by John Player & Sons 1925). I believe the cigarette cards are in the public domain as such were made available in 1925 and 1933, respectively. Given no attribution of the artists, it appears these entered the public domain in 1983 - 50 years after creation and publication.

A British Pathe' silent film of the race can be found online here: <https://bit.ly/1924GrandNational>

- "world-record 45 cameramen" filmed race
- King George V in attendance

Upcoming Book

"Rarely has the romance of a horse taken hold on the general public so much as in the case of Master Robert..."

Weekly Dispatch, March 30, 1924

The author of that 1924 Weekly Dispatch quote couldn't have known the whole story, which, it turns out, is far more romantic and inspiring than was known at the time.

I have recently completed a narrative nonfiction novel manuscript about Master Robert's journey to his ultimate victory, which I will be presenting shortly to literary agents for consideration. Why a book about another Grand National winner? Master Robert's National Hunt career and ultimate Grand National participation and performance was particularly improbable and inspiring, and took place during a notably interesting period in history.

I believe Master Robert's story may serve as a defining Grand National tale, beginning with breeder Robert McKinlay in Donegal, Ulster Province at the outset of the Irish Home Rule debate (1912), continuing there and in Kildare (The

Curragh) through World War I (1914-1918) and proceeding to The Curragh (again) and through Ulster after the start of and during the War of Independence (1919-1921), and subsequently, into Gatsbyesque England at the height of the British Empire, when The Grand National was the most significant single day sporting event in the world. The life, times and decisions of eight owners, Master Robert's own personality and physical condition, and Aubrey Hastings' and Bob Trudgill's influence were all factors during a twelve year dramatic odyssey culminating with earning the Grand National Blue Riband.

I look forward to sharing the fuller story upon book launch.

A website for the project is established: www.masterrobert.horse

My Background

I am a resident of New York City and native Philadelphian of Irish Catholic heritage, with ancestral roots in counties Derry, Tyrone and Tipperary.

Until ten years ago, I possessed an insignificant knowledge of my Irish heritage. On my first trip to Ireland in 2013, through a series of serendipitous events, I met a third cousin of mine, previously unknown to me, during a visit to County Derry. After spending a pleasant few days with my newly-discovered relative - learning much about my paternal County Derry heritage - he asked me on my way out of his door: "Do you know the story of Master Robert?" My cousin told me that Master Robert won the 1924 Grand National, which I knew to be the world's most significant steeplechase competition. He explained to me that his uncle, Patrick Murray (my great granduncle) owned the horse for a time before he won, and that he kept the horse at the local pub he owned which still exists. He told me I should stop by on my way out of town. Wow, I thought; That's pretty cool. So I did indeed visit Paddy Murray's old pub (now named Bryson's in Magherafelt, Derry) on my way out of town. [The History | Bryson's Magherafelt \(brysonsmagherafelt.com\)](http://brysonsmagherafelt.com)

Arriving at the pub, I quickly found hanging on the wall inside was a 1999 Mid Ulster Mail newspaper article about Pat Murray's ownership of Master Robert, the source of the story being Pat's son, Joe (another third cousin of mine of which I had been unaware) who recounted the tale when he came 'home' on a visit from Canada - the country to which Murray and his family emigrated in 1929.

I returned to Manhattan much richer from my visit, never imagining I would have been so fortunate to meet a third cousin, see my great grandfather's childhood home, and hear this cool story about Master Robert. I was curious to learn more about this 'horse story', my interest resonating due to having grown up around the 'thoroughbred racing' game. I began casual research on the subject, which continued into deeper research including meeting descendants of the several of those involved (including the grandson of the breeder; the son of an owner after the breeder but before the National Hunt; the grandson of jockey Bob Trudgill, and the 13th Earl of Airlie (the son of the 12th Earl who won with the horse), whereby I developed substantial information which portrayed a compelling historical story inspiring me to write a book.