



The British  
Psychological Society  
Northern Ireland Branch



# Origins of Psychology NI: The evolution and impact of the science and practice of psychology in Northern Ireland



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In the context of the 60th Anniversary of the Northern Ireland Branch of the BPS, the Origins of Psychology NI project has been sourcing new historical materials, both written materials and personal knowledge, specific to the growth and impact of psychology in Northern Ireland. Over the past two years, we have been searching through the minutes of meetings (e.g. the minutes of the NIBPS committee and scientific meetings, the minutes of QUB Senate) and other historical psychology publications making reference to people and events in NI (e.g. Quarterly Bulletin of the BPS, early issues of the British Journal of Psychology, the BPS History Archive, Psychology at the New University of Ulster, the First Ten Years). We have also been helped by the personal recollections of people who have made significant contributions themselves, and we have made extensive use of the memories of their students.

This document provides a first overview of our findings so far in the form of a chronology of events, with specific reference to the early days of psychology in Northern Ireland – from the turn of the 20th century to 1980. **It should be noted that this timeline is 'work in progress' and does not necessarily yet contain all significant events related to the development and impact of psychology in Northern Ireland during this period.**

The findings from the project will eventually form a multimedia interactive timeline, similar to the BPS Origins timeline, <http://origins.bps.org.uk>. The goal then is that the multimedia materials can be used to promote psychology at public events organised by BPS member networks in Northern Ireland and by partner organisations, for example, NIBPS annual public lectures, 'Flavour of Psychology' lectures (for second-level students and their teachers/careers' teachers), psychology open days and careers' days, policy events (e.g. Science at Stormont, Psychology at Stormont), science exhibitions (e.g. Young Innovators In Northern Ireland, similar to The Big Bang), museum exhibitions (e.g. WW5 science museum).

Funds to support the project were awarded by the BPS Public Engagement Fund. The project is also receiving financial support from the psychology departments of the three Northern Ireland Universities – the Open University, Queen's University, and Ulster University. The NI Branch and local Divisions are also providing funds. We gratefully acknowledge their support.

Carol McGuinness and the Origins team, NIBPS Committee

March 2016

<http://origins.bps.org.uk>

# Origins of Psychology in Northern Ireland: A timeline up to 1980

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- 1914** Charles Wilfred Valentine becomes the first psychologist to be appointed in Northern Ireland, to the first Chair of Education at Queen's University. He occupies the Chair until 1919. He had worked with C.S. Myers in Cambridge. He publishes the third edition of *An Introduction to Experimental Psychology in Relation to Education* while at Queen's. He later founds the *British Journal of Educational Psychology* in 1931 and edits it for 25 years. He was President of the British Psychological Society in 1947–48.
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- 1935** George Seth and Douglas Guthrie publish *Speech in Childhood: Its development and disorders*. Hearnshaw (1964:72) notes this book as 'making a contribution of some importance' to understanding children's language disorders during those early years.
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- 1946** George Seth arrives in Queen's as a lecturer in psychology in the Department of Education. His specialism is in child and developmental psychology and he had worked both as an academic and in child guidance clinics in Edinburgh and in Cardiff.
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- 1949** Peter McEwen joins the Department of Education at Queen's as a lecturer in psychology. His specialist interest is in perception and figural after-effects. Peter goes on to be Foundation Chair of Psychology at University of Stirling in 1966.
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- 1950s** The first qualification for educational psychologists in Northern Ireland is a BEd with specialisation in psychology, and later, an MEd. Educational psychology services expand during the 1950s. Their main work is the assessment of special educational needs. Early educational psychologists include: Kenneth Harrison, Geoffrey Dell, George Begley, Frank Fee, Beatrice Willis, and John McGilton.
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- 1951** Psychology at Queen's becomes a separate department and moves to Lennoxvale where it remains until the early 1990s.
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- 1952** Honours degrees in psychology at Queen's begin. Early graduates include: Martin McHugh (Founding Professor of Psychology at University College Galway, 1971), Robert Farr (Professor of Psychology at London School of Economics from 1983 until he retired in 2000, author of *The Roots of Modern Social Psychology*, 1996, acclaimed as the 'first comprehensive history of social psychology'), Thomas Kellaghan (First Director of the newly formed Educational Research Centre, St Patrick's College Dublin in 1966, and leads the first standardised testing in the Republic of Ireland). All three were lecturers in the Department of Psychology at Queen's for short periods in the 1960s.
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- 1954** Queen's Senate Minutes report the purchase of a calculating machine for psychology, cost £395.
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- 1956** The Northern Ireland Branch of the British Psychological Society holds its first meeting on 28 January. The meeting is opened by the General Secretary of the Society, Mr Arthur Summerfield. The minutes note that 'with the formation of the two youngest branches, the Welsh and Northern Ireland Branches...all parts of the United Kingdom are now represented.'

George Seth is elected as the first Chair of the Branch and makes a presentation on 'Psychology in the Community'. Nineteen members attend, including three students and two guests. This inaugural meeting is attended by psychologists from both Northern Ireland and from the Republic.

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**1957** Halla Beloff is appointed to work in the Department of Psychology at Queen's on problems of learning and thinking in cases of brain injury. Her salary is paid from a grant from the Medical Research Council.

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**1958** George Seth is appointed as Founding Chair of Psychology at Queen's. He leads the Department until he retires in 1971.

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**1959** The first joint meeting of the Northern Ireland Branch and the Ulster Neuropsychiatric Society is held on 13 February. A paper is read by Dr D Russell Davis, Medical Psychology Laboratory, University of Cambridge on 'Critical Periods of Learning in Human Development'. Regular joint meetings are then held between the two bodies.

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**1959** Dr Margaret Sutherland from the Department of Education at Queen's presents a paper to the Branch on 16 May on 'Co-education and School Attainment'. This work is subsequently published in the British Journal of Educational Psychology.

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**1959** John Graham White is appointed jointly by Queen's and the Northern Ireland Hospitals' Authority as a lecturer in clinical psychology in the Department of Mental Health and as a Principal Clinical Psychologist in the Belfast area. His remit is to initiate and maintain psychological services as well as to organise clinical psychology training across Northern Ireland. He is one of the founding fathers of clinical psychology in the UK, and he leads clinical training in Northern Ireland until 1974. The appointment of a second clinical psychologist, Jim Patten, follows quickly in 1961.

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**1963** The first clinical psychologists graduate from the new MSc in Abnormal Psychology and clinical services expand throughout the 1960s. Early graduates include: Marjorie Olley, Don McKay, Harry McAllister, Jim Hollywood, Des O'Mahony, Jeremy Harbison, and Ruth Elliot.

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**1964** George Shouksmith joins the Department of Psychology at Queen's and leads developments in social and occupational psychology. He previously worked in the University of Canterbury in New Zealand and was the first occupational psychologist to work in selection for British European Airways. George Shouksmith returns to New Zealand in 1970 to lead psychology developments at Massey University.

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**1967** George Seth becomes President of the British Psychological Society. His presidential address is entitled 'Dissonance and Stress in the Teaching of Psychology: Some Reflections of an Accidental Psychologist'.

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**1967** The Annual Conference of the British Psychological Society is held in Belfast for the first time. The BPS Bulletin notes that a number of papers on Aversion Therapy are delivered and that the conditions deemed suitable for such treatment are alcoholism, homosexuality, transvestism and fetishism.

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**1967** The first residential conference of the Northern Ireland Branch is held at the Ballymascannon Hotel near Dundalk in the Republic of Ireland. A major theme is Applied Psychology in Ireland: A survey of psychological developments. Papers are presented on developments both in Northern Ireland and the Republic.

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- 1967** The Northern Ireland Council for Educational Research (NICER) establishes a research unit at Queen's, funded by Northern Ireland Department of Education. It is located in the Department of Psychology at Queen's and directed by an educational psychology researcher, Dr J.A. Wilson. NICER launches a programme of research on educational psychology topics that are relevant to Northern Ireland schools.
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- 1968** The MSc in Social and Occupational Psychology begins in the Department of Psychology at Queen's. First graduates include: Julie McCrae, Myrtle Richardson, and later David Stewart and Jackie Bates-Gaston.
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- 1968** The MSc in Developmental and Educational Psychology begins in the Department of Psychology at Queen's and that qualification now replaces the previous specialist BEds and MEds as the main training route for educational psychologists in Northern Ireland. The first graduates include: Kevin Campbell, Brian Greer, Catherine McCourt and Michael Shackleton Bailey. The masters programme is now directed by Dr Irene Turner who joined the Department in 1966.
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- 1969** A special meeting of the Northern Ireland Branch is held on the 23rd September with members of the Working Party on the proposed new Psychological Society of Ireland. The Working Party outlines its ideas and hopes that the form of the proposed learned Society will be structured along similar lines to the BPS. The Branch minutes note that the Branch Committee are sympathetic to the need for an Irish Psychological Society and agreed in principle that the two Societies should work in close communication with another.
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- 1970** The Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) is formed, as the learned and professional society for psychologists in the Republic of Ireland. NIBPS and the newly formed PSI continue to hold joint meetings and to co-operate on other matters. Over the next 30 years, four psychologists from Northern Ireland are elected as Presidents of PSI (Rod Power, Stuart Lewis, Carol McGuinness, and Roger Woodward) and the Irish Journal of Psychology is edited on two occasions by psychologists from Northern Ireland (jointly by Ken Brown and Carol McGuinness from Queen's, and then by Chris Lewis from Ulster University).
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- 1971** Richard Lynn is appointed to the Founding Chair of Psychology at the New University of Ulster at Coleraine. He previously worked as a research professor at the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) in Dublin. His research specialism is individual differences, specifically national differences in intelligence. His programme of research proves controversial over the coming years. Richard leads developments in psychology at the University of Ulster until his retirement.
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- 1971** George Seth retires from Queen's. Mark Haggard is appointed as the new Chair at Queen's. He is an experimental psychologist with specialist interest in hearing and auditory processing.
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- 1972** The first cohort of students on the new University of Ulster psychology degree begin their studies. The Department quickly expands. Ed Cairns and Ken Heskin are appointed in 1972 (the latter goes to Trinity Dublin in 1976), followed by John Beech and David James in 1973, Julian Leslie in 1974, Ronnie Wilson and Bill Mercer in 1976.
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- 1973** The Open University begins teaching a social studies degree, including psychology, to prisoners in Northern Ireland. Many of these students go on to pursue postgraduate studies in psychology either while still in prison or after they were released.
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- 1973** NICER publishes the first survey of reading standards for 11 and 15 year olds in Northern Ireland. The survey was requested by the Northern Ireland Department of Education.
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- 1973** A book by a US psychologist, Rhona Fields, published by Penguin, *A Society on the Run: A Psychology of Northern Ireland*, is withdrawn by the publisher following controversy about the adequacy of the research methods and conclusions.
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- 1974** Jeremy Harbison, one of the first clinical psychologists in Northern Ireland, joins the civil service and goes on to be one of the most influential figures in health and social policy in Northern Ireland. Many other psychologists follow in his footsteps, creating niche opportunities to shape social, health and educational policy in Northern Ireland.
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- 1975** First graduates from the New University of Ulster psychology degree include: Ian Bankhead, Tommy Cammock, Brendan Bunting, Micky Keenan, Patricia Donnelly (nee Stapleton), Maurice Stringer, Geraldine Scott-Hayes.
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- 1975** The early research conducted by NICER is reported by John Wilson in *Research Intelligence*, a publication of the British Educational Research Association. He reports on studies related to early school leaving (supported by a grant from the recently created UK Social Science Research Council), monitoring reading standards, examination research, social disadvantage and school attainment, as well classroom observation methodologies and findings. Research staff employed by NICER at this time include Karen Trew, John Bill and Brendan Spelman.
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- 1976** Julian Leslie from the University of Ulster co-founds Behaviour Analysis in Ireland Group. This group is now the Division of Behaviour Analyses of the Psychological Society of Ireland, and regularly holds symposia at conferences.
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- 1976** Over a five year period from 1976–1981 five women lecturers are appointed to the Department of Psychology at Queen's – Carol McGuinness (1976, cognitive psychology), Maire Logan-Ryan (1976, developmental psychology, who died in 1981), Karen Trew (1977, social psychology), Liz McWhirter (1979, developmental psychology), Celia McCrea (1981, clinical psychology). These five lecturers joined two existing women lecturers, Dr Irene Turner (appointed in 1966) and Dr Elizabeth Hoy (appointed in 1969). Women then represented one-third of the academic staff in the Department.
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- 1977** Ken Brown is appointed to the Chair and Head of Department at Queen's following Mark Haggard's move to the Institute of Hearing Research in Nottingham. Ken's research specialism is psychobiology and animal behaviour and he joined the Department in 1968 as a lecturer. Ken leads developments in psychology at Queen's for 21 years and retired in 1999. He was President of the British Psychological Society in 2004–2005.
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- 1977** The Northern Ireland Branch celebrates the 21st anniversary of the formation of the Branch. The Branch minutes report that, in the first 21 years, 200 papers were presented by 150 local speakers, 50 overseas speakers, and nearly 7000 people attended Branch activities.
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- 1977** Rushton and Endler publish a paper in the BPS Bulletin reviewing all UK university psychology departments and report that the New University of Ulster has the highest average productivity in research per member of staff at two publications per person per year. Richard Lynn is listed among the top 20 British psychologists on the basis of citation count analysis.
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- 1978** A conference on 'Children and Young People Living in a Society under Stress' is organised by the Branch and Regional Office, and convened by Joan and Jeremy Harbison. This conference is pivotal in providing a platform for psychological research on the challenges facing children and young people in Northern Ireland at that time, and is the first of several conferences in the 1980s on the 'troubles'. The conference proceedings are published as a book in 1980, Harbison, J. & Harbison, J. ( eds) (1980), *A Society Under Stress: Children and Young People in Northern Ireland*.
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- 1979** The Vice-Chancellor of Queen's, Professor Peter Froggatt, unveils a portrait of George Seth by a renowned Ulster artist, Raymond Piper, at a special meeting of the Northern Ireland Branch on 1 March 1979. The portrait was commissioned by the Branch to honour Professor Seth as the first Professor of Psychology in Ireland – north and south.
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- 1979** Lorraine McClatchey from Queen's wins the first All Ireland Young Psychologist of the Year Competition. She is funded by the Branch to present her paper entitled 'An alternative approach to speech reading' at the BPS Annual Conference in Nottingham. (This competition is later renamed Student Psychologist of the Year, to avoid age discrimination.)
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- 1980** Following a decision by the Branch and Regional Office to host conferences that address societal challenges facing Northern Ireland, a one day conference on Alcohol Consumption in Northern Ireland is held on 11 December, attended by a range of other professionals and policy makers. This is the first of several such conferences over the next few years.
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- 1980** Ken Heskin, now at Trinity College Dublin, publishes *Northern Ireland: A Psychological Analysis* (Gill & McMillan).
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- 1980** Ed Cairns and colleagues at the University of Ulster publish their first study on children's awareness of violence in Northern Ireland from viewing television, in the *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*. They compare children who are resident in Northern to Scottish children who also see Northern Ireland TV news and programmes. Ed Cairn's work, conducted with both local and international colleagues, will make a major international contribution to our understanding of social identity, conflict and peace, and children and violence.
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It should be noted that this timeline is 'work in progress' and does not necessarily yet contain all significant events related to the development and impact of psychology in Northern Ireland during this period.

## From the early years of the Branch



## Moving on to later years of the Branch



## Moving on to later years of the Branch



## 50th Anniversary of the Branch



# Minutes of the First Meeting of the NI Branch

(typed from the original handwritten script)

The first meeting of the Northern Ireland Branch of the Society was held in the Psychology Department of Queens University, 7 Lennoxvale, Malone Road on Saturday, 28th January, 1956 at 2.30pm. Nineteen members and guests were present. The meeting was opened by Mr Arthur Summerfield, General Secretary of the Society who had flown from London that morning to attend. Mr Summerfield reviewed briefly the history of the Society from the original meeting in University College, London in October, 1901, to the formation of the youngest branches the Welsh and Northern Ireland Branches. These, he said, would probably be the last new branches in this country since all parts of the United Kingdom were now represented. At the end of his review, Mr Summerfield conducted the election of the Branch chairman. Dr George Seth of Queen's University was elected unanimously and thereupon took the chair, vacated by Mr Summerfield. In the further elections of officers and committee of the branch the following were appointed:

Secretary/Treasurer: Mr Peter McEwen  
Members of Committee: Professor H. M. Knox, Dr. E. M. Bachett, Professor E. Crawford,  
Mrs. H. Beloff, Dr. K. Harrison and Mr. W. McClure

It was agreed to postpone any final drawing up of Branch rules until the Society's Articles and Byelaws Revision was completed. After some discussion, Saturday afternoon was unanimously accepted as the best time for meetings for the present year. A proposal that one meeting per year should be held in Dublin and the others in Belfast was referred to the Committee. This ended the business part of the meeting. The first paper was read by the Chairman on 'Psychology in the Community'. A summary appears below:

*(in the original minutes, the next section was typed and inserted from another document)*

Paper read to the Northern Ireland Branch, January 28th, 1956.

## Psychology in the Community

By George Seth

The foundation of the Child Study Society by Sully, on the advice of Galton, antedated by nearly a decade the foundation of the British Psychological Society itself. This premonition of the child guidance movement serves to emphasize the long-standing relation in the scientific era of psychology between fundamental inquiry and the impact of the science upon practical affairs. Faced with increasingly urgent demands, it is for the psychologists themselves to say whether the challenges that reach them are of the kind that their training and accumulated knowledge permit them to accept. It is for the psychologists also to educate the community to address to them the kind of problems in which they ought to be interested. These considerations are doubly important in an area like Northern Ireland, where psychology is a new implantation.

This is not to assert the claims of the 'applied' branches against the prestige of the 'fundamentalists'. But the austere psychologist will not long survive if he alone is interested in his continued existence, or if in his avoidance of the 'maelstrom of activity and 'doing good' he refuses to acknowledge some personal (or professional) responsibility towards the individual, the group, or the community who have laid some of their dilemmas before him. Pure psychology has for long been living on the efforts of those psychologists who, in industry, in education and elsewhere, were earning its keep – albeit not in a financial sense. Moreover – witness the Education Act of 1944 – these psychologists have taken with them into the outside world a new set of values that are inherent in the psychological approach. The misunderstandings that have bedevilled the application of Butler principles in Northern Ireland high-light the fact that the psychologist in the community must work through the community, that he must educate his non-psychological collaborators. He is doomed to final defeat if he fails in that primary task.

The tender-minded educationist has taken not unkindly to those aspects of psychology that seemed relevant. The welcome from the tough-minded industrialist has been less cordial. It is an odd and disturbing state of affairs in which 'in industry there are highly trained technologists for the application of every science except the science of man' (Mace). The problems of peace – of productivity, of the effective deployment of manpower, of the will to work- are no less serious than those of war. Psychology alone cannot supply the answer to them, but to get that answer psychologists, amongst others, will be necessary. Finally, the problem of creativity, of how productive thinking is to be organized in our contemporary great society, is one that challenges interdisciplinary research at the highest level. The psychologist has not yet achieved the basic data necessary for a critique of those institutions whose main function is the organization of thought and will (Graham Wallas). The achievement of such a novum organum is still far off, but it could be at least one factor in the struggle for social health, and even for continued existence.

*(in the original minutes, the next section was handwritten)*

- Present: Mr Summerfield, Dr Seth, Mrs Halla Beloff, Mr John Beloff,  
Dr P.J.R. Dempsey, Mr James Drewery, Mr P.M. Hughes,  
Professor H.M. Knox, Mr W.J. McClure, Mr Peter McEwen,  
Mr James McGilton, Mr D.F. McNeill, Mrs J.M. Seth
- Student members: Miss R. Willis, Mr Frank Fee
- Guests: Mrs E. Treadwell, Mr J. Wilson, Mr S. McGuffin

# Northern Ireland Branch of the British Psychological Society 1956–2016

Year	Chairs	Secretaries/Treasurers
1956	Dr George Seth	Mr Peter McEwen
1957	Dr George Seth	Dr Peter McEwen
1958	Dr George Seth	Dr Peter McEwen
1959	Dr Peter McEwen	Dr Halla Beloff
1960	Dr Peter McEwen	Dr Halla Beloff
1961	Mr Geoffrey Dell	Dr Halla Beloff
1962	Mr Geoffrey Dell	Dr Halla Beloff
1963	Mr Geoffrey Dell	Mr Martin McHugh
1964	Mr Graham White	Mr Martin McHugh
1965	Mr Graham White	Mr Martin McHugh
1966	Mr Graham White	Miss Marjorie Olley
1967	Mr Frank Fee	Miss Marjorie Olley
1968	Mr Frank Fee	Miss Marjorie Olley
1969	Mr Frank Fee	Miss Marjorie Olley
1970	Dr George Shouksmith	Mr Ken Brown
1971	Dr Rod Power	Mr Ken Brown
1972	Dr Rod Power	Mr Ken Brown
1973	Dr Rod Power	Dr Bill Byth
1974	Dr John Wilson	Dr Bill Byth
1975	Dr John Wilson	Dr Bill Byth
1976	Dr John Wilson	Mr David Hale
1977	Mr Jeremy Harbison	Mr David Hale
1978	Mr Jeremy Harbison	Mr David Hale
1979	Mr Jeremy Harbison	Mrs Joan Harbison
1980	Dr Bill Byth	Mrs Joan Harbison
1981	Dr Bill Byth	Mrs Joan Harbison
1982	Dr Bill Byth	Dr Carol McGuinness
1983	Mr Mervyn Gilmour	Dr Carol McGuinness
1984	Mr Mervyn Gilmour	Dr Carol McGuinness
1985	Mr Mervyn Gilmour	Dr Ronnie Wilson

<b>Year</b>	<b>Chairs</b>	<b>Secretaries/Treasurers</b>
1986	Mrs Joan Harbison	Dr Ronnie Wilson
1987	Mrs Joan Harbison	Dr Ronnie Wilson
1988	Mrs Joan Harbison	Dr Jim Livingstone
1989	Dr Ed Cairns	Dr Jim Livingstone
1990	Dr Ed Cairns	Dr Jim Livingstone
1991	Dr Ed Cairns	Dr Gerry Mulhern
1992	Dr Liz McWhirter	Dr Gerry Mulhern
1993	Dr Liz McWhirter	Dr Gerry Mulhern
1994	Dr Liz McWhirter	Mrs Jenny Marks
1995	Dr Jim Livingstone	Mrs Jenny Marks
1996	Dr Jim Livingstone	Mrs Jenny Marks
1997	Dr Jim Livingstone	Dr Judith Wylie
1998	Dr Karen Trew	Dr Judith Wylie
1999	Dr Karen Trew	Dr Judith Wylie
2000	Dr Karen Trew	Dr Chris Lewis
2001	Professor Ken Brown	Dr Chris Lewis
2002	Professor Ken Brown	Dr Chris Lewis
2003	Professor Ken Brown	Dr Orla Muldoon
2004	Professor Noel Sheehy	Dr Orla Muldoon
2005	Professor Noel Sheehy	Ms Geraldine O'Hare
2006	Professor Noel Sheehy	Ms Geraldine O'Hare
2007	Professor Maurice Stringer	Ms Geraldine O'Hare
2008	Professor Maurice Stringer	Dr Barbara McConnell
2009	Professor Maurice Stringer	Dr Barbara McConnell
2010	Professor Carol McGuinness	Dr Barbara McConnell
2011	Professor Carol McGuinness	Dr Barbara McConnell
2012	Professor Carol McGuinness	Dr Barbara McConnell
2013	Professor Carol McGuinness	Dr Barbara McConnell
2014	Professor Carol McGuinness	Dr Barbara McConnell
2015	Professor Carol McGuinness	Dr Barbara McConnell
2016	Professor Chris McCusker	Dr Barbara McConnell

# Notes

# Notes

# The Origins NI Project Team:

## Project grant holders

Carol McGuinness

Ken Brown

## Members of the core team

Carol McGuinness (Project Lead)

Ken Brown

Karen Trew

Liz Sproule (Project Researcher)

Anne Kerr (NIBPS Branch Advisor)

## With help from

Jackie Bates-Gaston

Frank Fee

Karen Hagan

Peter Hepper

Julian Leslie

Chris McCusker

Gerry Mulhern

Maurice Stringer

Ronnie Wilson

and members of the NIBPS Committee (2014–2016)

And offers of help from other colleagues for later stages of the timeline

The Origins NI project is greatly helped by the availability of a full set of Branch Minutes from 1956–2016. Professor George Seth's handwritten notes about the early psychology graduates from Queen's were also very helpful.

The Origins NI project is grateful for additional financial support from the three Northern Ireland Universities – the Open University, Queen's University, and Ulster University.



Northern Ireland Branch and Regional Office  
School of Psychology  
Queen's University Belfast  
18–30 Malone Road  
Belfast BT9 5BP

Tel: 028 90974129  
E-mail: [n.ireland@bps.org.uk](mailto:n.ireland@bps.org.uk)  
Web: [www.bps.org.uk/ni](http://www.bps.org.uk/ni)  
Twitter: [@nibps](https://twitter.com/nibps)