

Proceedings 2007

Annual General Meeting 2007

The Annual General Meeting, which attracted an attendance of 30, was held at the Officers' Mess, Cathal Brugha Barracks, at 11.15 a.m. on Saturday 24 November 2007. Colonel Donal O'Carroll presided. The Minutes of the 2006 Annual General Meeting were circulated and approved, and the officers made their accustomed reports.

During the year Commandant Paul Mullally had handed over his duties as Honorary Record Secretary to Captain Padraic Keane, who was now confirmed in that office in Commandant Mullally's stead.

Colonel Patrick Kirby, who had hitherto undertaken the membership work jointly with Captain Keane as one of two Joint Honorary Membership Secretaries, thereupon became sole holder of the office of Honorary Membership Secretary, and a consequential amendment was made to the Rules of the Society in recognition of that change.

The other incumbent honorary officers, Dr. Patrick McCarthy, Commandant Frank McGoldrick and Dr. Kenneth Ferguson, were re-elected as Correspondence Secretary, Treasurer and Editor respectively.

Commandant Paul Mullally was elected a member of Council for a three-year term, filling a vacancy brought about by the decision of Dr. Seán Duffy not to seek re-election. Dr. Dermot Bradley, Commandant Louis O'Brien, Major Michael Kirby and Mr. Paul Kerrigan were re-elected as ordinary members of Council.

Membership

Colonel Patrick Kirby's report as Honorary Membership Secretary, delivered in his absence by Captain Keane, informed the Annual General Meeting that regular membership of the Society stood at 674 compared with 655 at the start of the corresponding period in 2006. During 2007 there had been 13 deaths (7 annual members, 5 life members, and one honorary member), and 11 resignations. 10 persons had been struck-off for non-payment of subscriptions. 45 new members had been recruited. *The Irish Sword* continued to be sent to numerous institutions and libraries. The circulation of the journal, as effected by post, stood at 856 copies.

Accounts

The Honorary Treasurer reported that the financial position of the Society was healthy. Income during the year had been €29,985 (compared with €29,856 in 2006). Expenditure had been €29,038 (compared with €20,875 in 2005): here the difference reflected the fact that payment had been made for three (rather than two) issues of *The Irish Sword*. The accounts disclosed an excess of €967 of income over expenditure for the year, and allowed for a balance forward in the Capital Account of €54,563, compared with €53,596 in 2006.

The accounts were approved, as was the re-appointment as auditor of Mr. Gerard Tully, of the firm of Rynne Tully Ward.

Lectures

Lectures on the following seven themes were delivered on Fridays during the lecture seasons in spring and autumn:

'The nobility of the Pale and local defence in the sixteenth century', by Mr. Gerald Power.

'John Mitchell and the Confederacy', by Mr. James Quinn.

'An Irishman in Aqaba: Colonel Pierce Joyce and the Arab revolt, 1916-18', by Dr. David Murphy.

''Unparalleled murder'': the treatment of prisoners of war by the Parliamentary navy in Ireland', by Miss Elaine Murphy.

'Irish soldiers and regiments in France before 1688', by Dr. Éamon Ó Ciosáin.

'The Battle of Wijschaete, 7 June 1917', by Mr. Tom Burke, O.B.E..

'The Flight of the Earls and the beginning of the Irish military diaspora', by Professor John McGurk.

The audiences which assembled at Griffith College were generally large, and sometimes so large as to put the capacity of the lecture theatre to the test.

Field Days: Cork Harbour and the Curragh

The Society's summer weekend tour took place over the holiday weekend 2-4 June, when Colonel Donal O'Carroll, President, led a tour of Cork Harbour. The party set out from Cathal Brugha Barracks on Saturday 2 June, and lunched at Kilcoran Lodge Hotel, near Cahir. On arrival at Cork a visit was paid to the military museum in Collins Barracks, after which the group booked into the nearby Ambassador Hotel. On Sunday 3 June upwards of eighty members and friends visited the Naval Base, Haulbowline, at the invitation of the Flag Officer, Naval Service, and were there received by Commander Pat McNulty, who accompanied the party throughout the visit. Coffee in the officers' wardroom preceded a presentation on the history of the naval base and of the Naval Service, and a walk around areas of interest. Lunch, served in the dining centre, was followed by a tour of the lower harbour by launch. That evening there was a communal dinner in the hotel with a capacity attendance. On Monday 4 June the party travelled to Cobh and embarked on a launch for Spike Island, where Captain Tom O'Neill (whose impressive knowledge of the history of the island made the visit most interesting) was the guide. Both here and at the Naval Base the President thanked those responsible for providing the visitors with a memorable experience. A stop for lunch was made at the Ambassador Hotel, after which the party departed for home.

The autumn field day, of which Commandant Paul Mullally was the organiser, took place on Sunday 9 September 2007. The venue was the Curragh Camp in County Kildare, whither 91 persons travelled by coach or car, of whom 85 sat down to lunch in the McDonagh Dining Centre, and 75 subsequently partook of an excellent dinner at the same venue. The group was welcomed by Commandant Pat Graham (who acted as liaison officer to the tour) and by the G.O.C. of the Defence Forces Training Centre (D.F.T.C.), by whose kind permission the visit was facilitated. After lunch the group convened nearby in Dunne Hall, where the G.O.C. gave an introductory talk about developments at D.F.T.C. Lieutenant-Colonel Mick Dolan followed with a talk and PowerPoint presentation on the history of the Curragh and its camp, and Commandant Mick Moore spoke on the Battle of Gibbet Rath. The group then moved by coach and car to the western end of the camp, to survey the rath at Gibbet Rath, where Commandant Moore again spoke. Afterwards the group visited the Artillery School, where NCOs displayed their weapons, including the 80mm mortar, two versions of the 105mm, a 25-pounder, modern target identification systems, and a battle simulator. The group then moved to 3 Infantry Battalion mechanised company to view, and be briefed on, two versions of the Mowag Armoured Personnel Carrier.

Overseas Tour

On 22 September 2007 fifty-three members and friends left Dublin Airport for Madrid on a tour of Spain led by the President, Colonel Donal O'Carroll. The formal focus of the tour was the study of the Peninsular War, a task made difficult by the dispersed nature of the conflict. Two battlefields, Talavera and Vitoria, were ultimately visited, but it was early on decided that time should be set aside for other objects, including a stay in Madrid and visits to the cities of Moorish Spain. All the hotels used were of good standard and centrally located.

In Madrid, the first excursion was to the magnificent El Escorial and to the nearby 'Valley of the Fallen' of the civil war. A tour of Madrid was followed by a most enjoyable reception at the Irish Embassy given by the ambassador, Peter Gunning. Present at the reception was Don Hugo O'Donnell, Duke of Tetuan, Vice-President of the Spanish Commission for Military History and an old friend of the President and of other members of the Society. A tour of the city of Toledo was followed by a visit to the site of the battle of Talavera, 1809. On 26 September the party moved by fast train to Seville for a stay of three days, during which, in addition to local tours, visits were made to Jerez de la Frontera and to Cadiz. On 29 September the scenic drive to Granada was broken at Cordoba for a two-hour stop to allow a visit to the grand mosque. During the three days in Granada the main visit was to the Alhambra, but the party was also taken on tours of the Royal Chapel, the cathedral, the Carthusian monastery, and through the fascinating streets of the old town.

On 2 October, the final destination, San Sebastian, was reached by internal flight. From there a short trip was made to Irun on the French frontier, which allowed a brief visit to France. Then

came a visit to the battlefield of Vitoria, 1813, the final major battle of the war in Spain. Appreciation of the action of the battle was greatly assisted by a very fine illuminated model in the local museum. The last day of the tour was on the programme as a 'free day' in San Sebastian. Alas, it rained all day, the only bad day of the stay: but some compensation was gained from the convivial communal dinner held that evening in the Sideria Donostriarra restaurant. On 6 October the party travelled to Bilbao for the return flight to Dublin.

In the leadership of Colonel O'Carroll, who devised the programme, the members of the tour were conscious of being very fortunate. Those who travelled were unanimous in expressing their satisfaction. The Society's Council is aware that Colonel O'Carroll undertook an exceptional burden in acting both as organiser and leader of the Spanish tour, a service, one among many, in respect of which the Society stands deeply in its President's debt.

The Irish Sword

Dr. Kenneth Ferguson reported that the two issues of *The Irish Sword* for 2006, Nos. 99 and 100 had been circulated together in March 2007, closely followed by the issue for the Summer of 2007 (No. 101). The numbering of the *Sword* had thus reached three digits. The latest issue had appeared early, therein mirroring the advent of summer in Ireland, which, to judge by the weather, might be held to have favoured the island in April rather than in July. Material was in hand for two general issues of the journal, and for an issue devoted to Austria. The first of these, No. 102 (Winter 2007), was expected to appear early in 2008.

The editor observed that *The Irish Sword* could take pride in keeping its readers up-to-date with news. If members had recently seen press and television coverage of the ceremony, held on Sunday 18 November 2007, at the Celtic cross at the former Limburg prisoner-of-war camp in Germany, they would have had reason to recognise the venue and be familiar with the theme from the illustrated article on that subject that had appeared in *Irish Sword* No. 97 (Summer 2005).

Alluding to the content of forthcoming issues, Dr. Ferguson remarked on the curiosity that the journal had 'cornered the market' in certain fields, instancing contributions linked to the Thompson submachine gun, and those touching the military exploits of the Sandes family of Kerry. The career of one member of that family, 'Captain Flora Sandes of the Serbian Army', would be examined in the first of the forthcoming issues, bringing the study of the Wild Geese to an unfamiliar region, and its focus to one who was evidently a goose, and not a gander.

In thanking colleagues, Dr. Ferguson mentioned Dr. David Murphy, the writing of whose book *The Irish Brigades 1685-2006* had brought him into contact with scholars overseas, some of whom he had approached to write for the *Sword*.

Irish Commission for Military History

Mr. J. P. Mulready, the Secretary General of the Irish Commission for Military History, reported to the A.G.M. on the activities of the International Commission in 2007. The XXXIIIrd Annual Congress, devoted to the theme 'Nation State, Nationalism and the Military', was held in Cape Town from 12 to 17 August. Mr. Mulready represented the Society and presented a paper entitled 'From Peace-keeping to Peace Enforcement – The experiences of a small European Neutral'. The paper outlined Ireland's path from a neutral state in World War II, through UN service and Partnership for Peace, to participation in the Nordic Battlegroup. The Congress was attended by 180 delegates and accompanying persons from 44 countries. 52 papers were presented, of which 39 were in English. Copies of all available papers will be published on the Congress website www.cihm.ac.za.

The *Bibliographie Internationale* of the International Commission, published annually, contains several hundred summary reviews of the latest military history books. Dr. Patrick McCarthy, Chairman of the Books Committee, contributed reviews of eight books of Irish interest for inclusion in Tome 29. Tome 28, which was published in 2007, contains ten such reviews.

In 2008 the annual Congress, the XXXIVth, will be held in Trieste from 31 August to 5 September, on the theme 'Military conflicts and civilian population: limited wars, total wars and asymmetric wars'. Professor Alan Kramer of Trinity College, Dublin will present a paper on behalf of the Society. Details of the event are available on the website www.cihm.difesa.it. The 2009 Congress will be held in Oporto, and that of 2010 in Amsterdam.

Annual Dinner

The St. Helen's Radisson Hotel in Stillorgan was the venue for the 52nd annual dinner, which took place on the evening of 24 November 2007, with 92 members and guests in attendance. Mr. Michael McDowell S.C., who was accompanied by his wife, Professor Niamh Brennan, was the guest of honour and principal speaker. Among other guests were representatives of the Defence Forces, the Department of Foreign Affairs, and University College Dublin.

The Dinner was organised by a committee, under the chairmanship of Commandant Martin Lenihan, on which Colonel Patrick Kirby and Commandant Louis O'Brien also served. Commandant O'Brien acted as Master of Ceremonies.

Acknowledgements

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In respect of the business of the International Commission of Military History, grateful acknowledgment is made to the Department of Defence, which is accustomed both to effect the transfer of the sum of 650 Swiss francs due annually as a subscription to the Commission, and to provide a subvention to the Society which covers the cost of sending a speaker to the annual congresses.