

Proceedings 2009

Annual General Meeting 2009

The Annual General Meeting was held at the Officers' Mess, Cathal Brugha Barracks, at 11.15 a.m. on Saturday 6 December 2009. Dr. Harman Murtagh, presiding, observed that the Society had now been in existence for sixty years. The Minutes of the 2008 Annual General Meeting were circulated and approved, as subsequently were the accounts for 2009. The officers gave their accustomed reports, the substance of which is related below.

All the incumbent honorary officers offered themselves for re-election, and were re-elected. The Honorary Editor, Dr. Kenneth Ferguson, was appointed a Vice-President. Mr. Anthony Kinsella and Commandant Anthony Cudmore were elected to the Council for the first time.

The President paid tribute to two members of the Council who had died during the year: Lieutenant-Colonel James P. Coyle, a Vice-President who had served for many years as Record Secretary and chairman of the Dinner Committee; and Mr. Paul Kerrigan, who had lectured on many occasions, and written extensively in *The Irish Sword*.

Membership

Colonel Patrick Kirby, the Honorary Membership Secretary, told the Annual General Meeting that regular membership of the Society stood at 700. 36 of these, whom he described as 'dead men walking', were in imminent danger of being struck off for non-payment. During 2009 there had been 17 deaths (including those of two Life Members), and 16 resignations (15 of individuals, and one of an institution). The Department of Foreign Affairs had cancelled a subscription for 35 copies of *The Irish Sword* intended for its own use; but the Department still supported the despatch of the journal to thirty-six overseas institutions. The losses had been counter-balanced by the recruitment of 57 new members. The position in December 2009 stood as follows:

Regular Members	700	Subscribing Institutions	86
Honorary Members	8	Exchange	14
Life Members	39	Copyright	13
Honorary Institutions	9	Department of Foreign Affairs	<u>36</u>
		Total:	905

Accounts

The Honorary Treasurer reported that the financial position of the Society remained healthy. Income during the year had ostensibly fallen to €24,268 (compared with €33,821 in 2008), but the difference was mainly attributable to the timing of the payment of a Department of Defence grant. Expenditure had been €24,043 (compared with €22,392 in 2008). To the resultant small surplus of income over expenditure of €225 might be added a profit of €1,028 on functions and field days, which allowed for a total sum of €1,253 to be carried forward in the Capital Account, bringing the state of that account to €64,233, compared with €62,980 in 2008.

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

Lectures

The following seven lectures were delivered at Griffith College on Fridays during the lecture seasons, four in the spring and three in the autumn:

- ‘Dynamic of destruction: culture and mass killing in the First World War’, by Professor Alan Kramer.
- ‘Airships over the North Channel during the Great War’, by Mr. Guy Warner.
- ‘Irish men and women in the French Resistance and S.O.E. during World War Two’, by Dr. David Murphy.
- ‘The Confederate Washington: the military leadership of Robert E. Lee’, by Dr. Patrick Geoghegan.
- ‘Aspects of the horse in Elizabeth’s Irish wars’, by Dr. Bairbre Curtis.
- ‘Atrocity, codes of conduct, and the Irish in the Confederate and Cromwellian Wars’, by Dr. Micheál Ó Siochrú.
- ‘“Take prompt and vigorous action”: the Chief of Staff’s report on the development of the Defence Forces during the Emergency’, by Dr. Michael Kennedy.

Field Days: the Belfast area and the Boyne Centre

Breaking from normal practice, the summer tour took place on a weekend, 13-15 June 2009, which did not include a public holiday. 76 members of the Society visited the greater Belfast area by coach and car. Following lunch at the Belmont Hotel, Banbridge, the group visited the Ulster Aviation Society’s collection at Long Kesh. Among the many fine aircraft seen was a recently acquired Aerospatiale Alouette helicopter (No. 202) from the Irish Air Corps. The Society’s thanks go to Paul McMaster and Ernie Cromie for facilitating an excellent visit. The party spent the night in Belfast at the Radisson Blu Hotel.

On Sunday the group departed for Newtownards where Paul Rea spoke on a colourful local hero, Lieutenant-Colonel Blair Mayne of the S.A.S. The tour proceeded to the Somme Heritage Centre outside Newtownards. The Centre, normally closed on Sundays, was kindly opened especially to facilitate the Society. Reconstructed trenches of the Battle of the Somme in 1916, exhibits on the recruiting and training of men, and life in the trenches, along with information on the three Irish Divisions in the British Army in the 1st World War, formed part of the well-equipped museum.

Following lunch at the Old Inn in Crawfordsburn, the group had been scheduled to visit Grey Point Fort on its way to Carrickfergus Castle but, upon receiving a phone call from an official in the Castle that a major battle enactment was about to commence there, the bus drove directly to Carrickfergus. An unplanned treat for members was a battle re-enactment involving Williamite, Jacobite and French ‘troops’, the French actors coming from southern France. Following a tour of the venerable Castle, built in 1177, members returned to Belfast where the customary communal dinner, with excellent fare, was held in the hotel.

On Monday morning the group headed to West Belfast where Dr. Peter Collins of St. Mary's University College, Belfast, gave a skilled commentary on the 'trouble' spots of the Falls and Shankill areas. Ample opportunity was given to photograph the many murals which adorn gable walls in the area depicting the folklore of both traditions. Dr. Collins then took the group to Stormont where members witnessed a debate in the Chamber. After lunch at Stormont, members met, and had a lively question and answer session with, Francie Mulloy and Willie Clarke, Sinn Féin M.L.A.s. The bus returned to Dublin in the afternoon.

The Boyne Visitor Centre, Oldbridge

On Sunday 23 August 2009, 88 members travelled to County Meath by coach and by car to visit the recently-opened Boyne Visitor Centre in Oldbridge. Because of the large number in the party, visitors were conducted around the Centre in two sub-groups. Exhibits included a large-scale laser model of the battlefield, original and replica weaponry, and an audio-visual show. Following lunch in the tearoom, the unified group was entertained to blackpowder musket firing and cavalry displays in the field opposite the Oldbridge Centre. Dr. Harman Murtagh then conducted the group on a walk over the battlefield. After about an hour, the group came under 'attack' from the weather. A sustained downpour assisted by strong winds proved too much for whatever umbrellas and rainwear members had remembered to bring with them. While Dr. Murtagh had managed to cover most aspects of his talk, a talk planned by Colonel Donal O'Carroll had to be abandoned. The walking tour of the battlefield was itself abandoned, and the tour bus managed to get very wet members back to the Centre by road. The tour then proceeded to Drogheda where changing facilities were available in the Boyne Valley Hotel prior to a very welcome dinner, attended by 50 members.

Planning of both events was undertaken by Dr. Murtagh, and the field-day administrator on both occasions was Commandant Paul Mullally.

Overseas Tour to Istanbul and Gallipoli

Between 21 September and 2 October 2009, 38 members (some of whom made their own way out) visited Istanbul and Gallipoli in a tour conducted on behalf of the Society by Group Tours International (G.T.I.), which had retained local guides in Turkey. Following the flight from Dublin by Turkish Airlines, the group was met by its principal guide, Mr Selim Akcaharman, and, on arrival in Istanbul, checked into the centrally-located 4-star Titanic City Hotel.

On the second and third days of the tour, members visited many of the main attractions of Istanbul including Hagia Sophia, the Underground Cistern, the Blue Mosque, Topkapi Palace, the Grand Bazaar, and the Egyptian Spice Market, and enjoyed a cruise on the Bosphorous. A communal dinner was held on the second evening in a roof-top terrace restaurant, which afforded beautiful night-time views of Hagia Sophia, the Blue Mosque, and the city skyline.

On the fourth day the group left Istanbul for the archaeological site at Troy before checking into the Iris Hotel, Canakkale, which was to be the base for the next five days. Visits to the battle sites on the Gallipoli peninsula, which involved taking a return ferry across the Dardanelles each day, were organised around the three major sectors of the Gallipoli campaign – ANZAC, Cape Helles and Suvla

Bay. The ANZAC tour included visits to Brighton Beach, Beach Cemetery, Shrapnel Valley, ANZAC Cove, the Nek, Walker's Ridge, the Ari Burnu Cemetery and the ANZAC commemorative site. Talks were given in Turkish by a local historian and translated by Mr. Akcaharman.

Visits to the Helles sector, where Irish units of the 29th Division fought, included V and W Beaches, Hill 16 and Doughty-Wylie's Grave, Helles Memorial, Alcitepe Village and Ecebat. Dr. Patrick McCarthy gave a detailed account of the action from a point overlooking V Beach. In the first landings at Cape Helles very heavy casualties were suffered by the Dubs and Munsters, as a result of which a composite battalion, known as the 'Dubsters', was formed. Lieutenant-General Gerard McMahan and Major-General The O Morchoe laid a wreath at the Helles Memorial to commemorate the fallen.

On Sari Bair Ridge overlooking Suvla Bay Dr. McCarthy spoke with particular reference to the actions of the 10th (Irish) Division. Visits included ones to Kiretch Tepe Ridge, where the Royal Dublin Fusiliers had suffered many casualties, and to Azmak, Scimitar and Green Hill Cemeteries. A simple, yet moving, wreath-laying ceremony commemorating the dead of all nations involved in the Gallipoli campaign was performed at the foot of Kiretch Tepe Ridge by Lieutenant-General McMahan, Major-General The O Morchoe, and the local history guide

On the last full day in Canakkale, members had a leisurely day in the town which included a visit to the outdoor exhibits of the military museum. That evening a BBQ was organised in a local *sibin*, where the singing talents of the group were put to the test. The tour returned to Istanbul where the participants had two full days of free time to explore the city. On 2 October, after an early breakfast, the group departed by Turkish Airlines for Dublin Airport.

The tour organising committee was Dr. McCarthy, Commandant Martin Lenihan and Commandant Paul Mullally. Those who travelled were unanimous that the tour had been a major success, and that the credit required to be shared between the tour operator, G.T.I. and its staff; the principal guide, Mr Selim Akcaharman; and the local history guide, who gave detailed talks principally relating to Turkish and local involvement in the various battles. The group was most appreciative of the carefully-prepared battle surveys, with particular reference to Irish involvement, which Dr. Patrick McCarthy gave at Helles and Suvla.

Conference on the War of Independence

Dr. McCarthy needed to return early from Turkey to superintend another Society event, a conference held at Collins Barracks to mark the ninetieth anniversary of the War of Independence. The conference, convened over two days on Friday 2 and Saturday 3 October 2009, and marked on its first evening by a dinner at the Ashling Hotel, attracted the support of close on 150 participants, and elicited so many offers of papers that the lectures had to be organised in parallel sessions. Professor Charles Townshend was the opening speaker on the first day, and Professor William Kautt spoke at the equivalent plenary session at the beginning of the second day. The concluding contribution, by Professor

Eunan O’Halpin and Dr. Daithí Ó Corráin, gave a foretaste of their forthcoming compilation, *The Dead of the Irish Revolution*. Many younger scholars were afforded an opportunity to give shorter presentations, of which there were 24. On the Saturday morning the Army very kindly put on display in the Barrack Square its 1920 Whippet Rolls Royce armoured car, Sliabh na mBan, a treasure that the Cavalry Corps brought up from the Curragh on a low-loader specially for the occasion. Another branch of the Army, the Military Archives, was a co-sponsor of the conference. The Society owes a great debt to its host, the National Museum of Ireland, for affording the use of the splendid venue at Collins Barracks. The efficient organisation of the conference, not just in general administration but in points such as catering and audio-visual facilities, attracted great praise. The credit for the organisation, scholarly and practical, goes to a team that included Dr. Anne Dolan of Trinity College, and Commandant Victor Laing, Captain Labhrás Joye, and Dr. David Murphy of the Society’s Council: but the guiding spirit was that of one who carried out the role with great modesty, Dr. Patrick McCarthy.

The Irish Sword

Dr. Kenneth Ferguson reported that two issues of *The Irish Sword*, No. 104 (Winter 2008) and No. 105 (Summer 2009), had been circulated together in March 2009. Material was in hand for one further general issue of the journal, No. 106 (Winter 2009), with which volume XXVI would be concluded, allowing a Table of Contents to be prepared. The principal effort of 2010 would be directed to the publication of the typescript history of 6th Division preserved among the papers of Sir Peter Strickland at the Imperial War Museum, together with some of the papers delivered at the Society’s War of Independence Conference. Once this material had been published the way lay open for the long-overdue appearance of an issue devoted to the Wild Geese of Austria.

Dr. Ferguson noted with sadness the death in June 2009 of Paul Kerrigan, who had written for *The Irish Sword* since 1974, and had been his friend for almost as long. There had been no contributor more loyal to the journal, or one as avidly interested in the military history of Ireland.

Irish Commission for Military History

‘Warfare in the Age of Napoleon: precedents, military campaigns and lasting impacts’ was the theme of the XXXVth Annual Congress, held in Porto, from 30 August to 4 September 2009. 86 papers were presented, 40 of which were in English. Dr. Ian Speller of the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, represented the Irish Commission, delivering a paper entitled ‘The War at Sea in the Age of Napoleon and the development of maritime strategy’. Mr. Peter Mulready, the Secretary General of the Irish Commission for Military History, was one of 300 delegates and accompanying persons from 36 countries who attended the conference.

Tome 30 of the *Bibliographie Internationale*, published in September 2009, contains nine reviews of books recommended for inclusion by Dr. Patrick McCarthy. Dr. McCarthy has submitted reviews of nine more books for inclusion in the succeeding volume.

In 2010 the annual congress, the XXXVIth, will be held in Amsterdam from 29 August to 3 September on the theme 'Insurgency and Counterinsurgency: Irregular Warfare from 1800 to the present'. It is intended that the Irish Commission will be represented at the event, details of which may be found on the Congress website at www.cihm2010.nl. The Congresses for 2011, 2012, and 2013 will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Tunisia and Japan respectively.

Annual Dinner

On the evening of 6 December 2009 Dr. Murtagh presided over the Annual Dinner, held for the first time at the Law Society, Blackhall Place. Lieutenant-General Pat Nash was the principal guest. Organised by the accustomed committee of Comdt Martin Lenihan (Chairman), Colonel Patrick Kirby and Comdt. Louis O'Brien, the Dinner was well supported at its new location.

Acknowledgements

The Society acknowledges its continuing obligation to the persons and institutions named on page 240 *supra*.
