

## Proceedings 2010

### **Disruption of the Society's activities by snow**

2010 is apt to be remembered within the Society, as in Ireland generally, as the year of the snow. Severe weather at the beginning of the year led to the cancellation of the lecture planned for January, and snow at the end of the year brought about the cancellation of the December lecture, and of the Annual General Meeting and Dinner. The weather of 2010 may prove to have been exceptional, but if unforeseen circumstances should in future imperil the Society's activities, members are advised to consult the Society's website, [www.mhsi.ie](http://www.mhsi.ie), for the latest information.

### **Lectures**

Six lectures were delivered at Griffith College on Fridays during the lecture seasons. These were:

- ' "An irregular loyalty" — aspects of military camaraderie in Ireland, 1922-24', by Dr. Justin Dolan-Stover [12 February].
- 'Oliver Nugent, the Irish gentry and the British Army, 1850-1950', by Mr. Nicholas Perry [19 March].
- 'The Warfare of Napoleon', by Colonel Donal O'Carroll [9 April].
- ' "Two bald men fighting over a comb" — the Falklands Conflict, 1982', by Dr. Ian Speller [23 April (rescheduled from 8 January)]
- 'The turning of Colonel Fitzhenry: from Wexford rebel and Napoleon's Irish Legion commander to Wellington defector', by Mr. Nicholas Dunne-Lynch and Mr. Tom McDonald [8 October].
- 'The Irish Defence Forces in the Congo, 1960-64', by Lieutenant-General Gerry McMahan [12 November].

The lecture planned for 3 December, 'Who died in the War of Independence, 1919-21', by Professor Eunan O'Halpin, was postponed because of the snow, and took place on 4 February 2011.

### **Gallipoli**

During the week 22 to 27 March 2010 Dr. Harman Murtagh [whose report on the event is here summarised] represented the Society at the dedication by President Mary McAleese of a monument to the Irish regiments that fought at Gallipoli during the disastrous campaign of 1915.<sup>1</sup> The event, at Green Hill Cemetery, was organised by the Somme Association, which also paid for the monument: a chest-high, lectern-like column of white stone, topped by an angled flat stone to which a bronze plaque is attached that carries the emblems of the eight Irish line regiments and an appropriate inscription. Although modest in scale beside the other Gallipoli monuments, it is well-positioned.

The monument was dedicated in the presence of more than a hundred people, mostly Irish. The group included the President's party, members of the Somme

<sup>1</sup> It is estimated that about 4,000 Irish soldiers died at Gallipoli. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalions of the Dublin, Munster and Inniskilling Fusiliers were part of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division that made the initial landing at Cape Helles in April 1915. The 10<sup>th</sup> (Irish) Division landed at Suvla Bay and Anzac in August.

Association, the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association, a number of Northern Ireland mayors, and a G.T.I.-organised group of 24 (of which Dr. Murtagh was a member) led by Major-General David O'Morchoe. The Defence Forces were represented by Major-General Dave Ashe, and the British Army by its attaché in Turkey. The governor of Canakkale, Abudulkadir Atalik, was also present.

President McAleese, in an appropriate speech, paid tribute to the Irish regiments and also to their opponents. She quoted Mustapha Kemal's remarkable and generous words in 1935:

You the mothers who sent their sons from far away countries, wipe away your tears. Your sons are now lying in our bosom and are at peace. After having lost their lives on this land, they have become our sons as well.

The dedication was preceded by a short service of remembrance in the cemetery itself. The *Last Post* was sounded by a bugler of the Royal Irish Regiment and the *Reveille* by a bugler from the Defence Forces. A wreath was laid by President McAleese, and other wreaths by Northern Ireland mayors. Eight wreaths were then laid in memory of the dead of the eight Irish regiments. Dr. Murtagh, wearing the Society's presidential gorget, laid the wreath for the Royal Irish Rifles. Prior to the ceremony President McAleese and all the Irish party were guests at a lunch jointly hosted by the Irish ambassador and the governor of Canakkale. On that and the following day the group was able to tour the Gallipoli peninsula, for much of the time in the company of the well-informed Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association, who conducted a private ceremony at the V-beach cemetery near Cape Helles.

#### **Tour to the English West Country, 21 to 23 May 2010**

As an innovation, and in lieu of a domestic Field Day, the Society undertook a summer visit to the English West Country. The administration was undertaken by Commandant Paul Mullally, but because of legislation governing the organisation of tours involving foreign travel, the booking arrangements were placed in the hands of G.T.I. (Group Travel International). Twenty-one members, led by Dr. Harman Murtagh, set out from Dublin Airport at the early hour of 6.30 a.m. on Friday 21 May and landed at Bristol Airport an hour later.

By mid-morning, the tour group had reached the Fleet Air Arm Museum at Yeovilton, the Royal Naval Air Station which is the busiest military air station in Europe. With four exhibition halls, over ninety aircraft, and thirty thousand artefacts, the Museum is the world's second largest naval aviation museum. In the 'Aircraft Carrier Experience', where museum meets theatre, visitors are 'transported' by helicopter to the replica flight deck of the carrier H.M.S. *Ark Royal*. Two excellent guides brought the group on a guided tour in the morning, but the afternoon was free to re-visit the exhibitions of choice. At mid-day a light lunch was provided in the Museum cafeteria, and at 4.00 p.m. the group was on its way to its hotel for the weekend, the Premier Inn Yeovil.

After breakfast on Saturday morning, the group travelled to the Tank Museum at Bovington, where a day-long tour was conducted. The Tank Museum, which is the museum of the Royal Tank Regiment and the Royal Armoured Corps, has 200 vehicles on display in six large halls, and is the only place where many rare and historic armoured fighting vehicles can be seen. £16 million has recently

been invested in its exhibitions and facilities. Many members availed of the opportunity to experience 'crewing' a Challenger main battle tank. Lunch was served in the fine museum cafeteria.

On the return trip to the hotel, the coach stopped at Moreton in Dorset, where Dr. Murtagh spoke at the grave of Thomas Edward Lawrence, 'Lawrence of Arabia', famous for his exploits as British military liaison officer to the Arab Revolt during the First World War.

On Sunday morning, having checked out of the hotel, the group set off for the city of Wells. Following a short tour of the walled precincts of the twelfth-century cathedral, the Bishop's Palace and the moated medieval stronghold, members visited the cathedral and participated in sung Matins. Lunch followed at the Bishop's Palace. In the afternoon, the tour moved to Westonzoyland, near Bridgewater in Somerset, and the site of the Battle of Sedgemoor. This battle, fought on 6 July 1685, marked the climax of the rebellion of the (Protestant) Duke of Monmouth, the illegitimate son of Charles II, against the (Catholic) James II. Monmouth, who had been living in exile in Holland when James succeeded Charles, was encouraged to return and to lead a rebellion. Although he managed to gather an army of 10,000 men, Monmouth was totally defeated. He was subsequently beheaded. 300 rebels were killed on the battlefield, and 1,000 more while fleeing. 320 were executed and 759 were transported as bonded slaves. James lost 200 men. Of Irish interest is the involvement on James's side of Patrick Sarsfield. The tour of the battle site was led by Lieutenant-General Barney White-Spunner, currently commander of the British Field Army.

Following the battlefield tour, the group returned to Bristol Airport to board a late evening return flight to Dublin.

#### **Field-Trip to Aughrim, Co. Galway, 12 September 2010**

Ninety-five members and friends registered for the Society's autumn field-day tour to Aughrim on Sunday 12 September 2010. In the village of Aughrim the 53 occupants of the coach from Dublin were met by 42 others who had travelled by car. All crammed into the small 'Auld Shillelagh' pub for a lunch of soup, sandwich and tea. The group then made the short walk to the Battle of Aughrim Interpretative Centre, where Julie, the manager introduced an audio-visual presentation about the battle. A large-scale model of the battle site is the main feature of the Interpretative Centre, and Dr. Harman Murtagh used this as an aid for giving a more detailed talk about the opposing forces. After the briefing at the Interpretative Centre, the group moved to Urraghry Hill, a high vantage point on the eastern side of the battle site. Kilcommadan Hill, where the Jacobite Infantry had their main defensive positions, as well as the present Aughrim Church, which is close to the former causeway and castle where the Williamite forces first broke through, were clearly visible. A handout was distributed which included a contemporary engraving of the battle, and identified the features of the terrain, the disposition of the opposing forces, and the three main Williamite manoeuvres. The group then moved to the site of the causeway, where Dr. Murtagh described the action in that area in greater detail. The modern commemorative Celtic Cross

was viewed. The tour group then proceeded to Athlone where an excellent dinner in the Hodson Bay Hotel was enjoyed by 71 members and friends.

Both tours of 2010, those to the West Country and to Aughrim, were very ably planned and conducted by Dr. Murtagh. For both the tour administrator was Commandant Paul Mullally, whose reports have here been summarised.

**Annual General Meeting 2010**

The Annual General Meeting, which was to have been held on 4 December 2010, was rescheduled for Saturday 5 February 2011, and took place at the Officers’ Mess, Cathal Brugha Barracks, at 11.15 a.m. Dr. Harman Murtagh presided. The honorary officers gave their accustomed reports, the substance of which is related below. The incumbent officers offered themselves for re-election, and were re-elected. Commandant Louis O’Brien, Major Michael Kirby and Commandant Paul Mullally, who had last been elected to the Council in 2007, were re-elected to serve for three more years.

**Membership**

Colonel Patrick Kirby, the Honorary Membership Secretary, told the Annual General Meeting that regular membership of the Society stood at 682, 185 of whom were not up-to-date with the payment of their subscriptions. During 2010 the names of 26 former members had been dropped for non-payment. There had been 10 deaths, and 10 resignations. It was noted with regret that the Library of Yale University had discontinued its subscription; and that the Oireachtas Library, for many years one of the Honorary Institutions to which *The Irish Sword* was presented, had indicated that it no longer wished to receive the journal. These reverses had been offset in part by the recruitment of 29 new members. The position at the end of 2010 was as follows:

Regular Members	682	Subscribing Institutions	85
Honorary Members	8	Exchange	14
Life Members	38	Copyright	13
Honorary Institutions	8	Department of Foreign Affairs	<u>37</u>
			Total: 885

**Accounts**

The Honorary Treasurer, Commandant Frank McGoldrick, assisted by the auditor, Mr. Gerard Tully, presented the accounts for the year ending on 30 September 2010. Thanks to the receipt of a Department of Defence grant (covering three years), income during the year had risen to €29,206 (compared with €24,268 in 2009); but expenditure had been €32,354 (compared with €24,043 in 2009). The increase in expenditure was attributable to the additional ‘War of Independence’ issues of *The Irish Sword*. The deficit for the year, €4,584, was met from the Capital Account, which now stood at €59,649, compared with €64,233 in 2009. The accounts were approved, as was the re-appointment as auditor of Mr. Gerard Tully, of the firm of Rynne Tully Ward.

**The Irish Sword**

Dr. Kenneth Ferguson reported that three issues of *The Irish Sword* had appeared in 2010. No. 106 (Winter 2009), an issue with the accustomed mixture of themes, had been distributed at Easter 2010, together with the Table of

Contents for volume XXVI. This mailing was followed soon afterwards by that of Nos. 107 (Spring 2010) and 108 (Summer 2010). These were the first of four issues that were being devoted to the War of Independence, the theme of the Society's Conference in 2009. No. 107, a thick issue of 192 pages, accommodated the text, together with an index, of the typescript history of 6<sup>th</sup> Division preserved among the papers of Sir Peter Strickland at the Imperial War Museum. No. 108, a slim issue of 80 pages, represented the first part of a collection of essays derived from lectures delivered at the Conference. Nos. 109 (Autumn 2010) and 110 (Winter 2010), the preparation of which was in hand, would contain further material on the War of Independence. Volume XXVII (2010), having been devoted exclusively to this theme, would therewith be concluded, and a Table of Contents prepared. Volume XXVIII (2011-12) would commence with Nos. 111 (Summer 2011) and 112 (Winter 2011), issues which would revert to the usual twice-yearly format and contain articles on a variety of subjects. It was expected that the first of these four intended issues would be circulated to members between Easter and Whit 2011.

#### **Irish Commission for Military History**

'Insurgency and Counterinsurgency: Irregular Warfare from 1800 to the present' was the theme of the XXXVI<sup>th</sup> Annual Congress, held in Amsterdam, from 29 August to 3 September 2010. 300 delegates and accompanying persons attended representing 39 countries. More than 80 papers were presented in a series of triple parallel sessions. The Congress also featured two round table discussions and a graduate student workshop. Dr. Patrick McCarthy presented a paper entitled 'The R.A.F. and the Irish War of Independence, 1919-1921'. Mrs. Dolores McCarthy was there to hear her husband, as were the Society's President, Dr. Harman Murtagh, the Secretary General of the Irish Commission for Military History, Mr. Peter Mulready, and Council Member Dr. David Murphy.

Tom 31 of the *Bibliographie Internationale*, due for publication in 2010, did not appear, but is expected in 2011, in print and online editions. It will contain nine reviews of books recommended for inclusion by Dr. Patrick McCarthy.

In 2011 the annual congress, the XXXVII<sup>th</sup>, will be held in Rio de Janeiro from 28 August to 2 September on the theme 'Decolonisation: colonial wars and independence from the eighteenth century to our day'. The Congress 2011 website is [www.cihm2011.com.br](http://www.cihm2011.com.br). The 2012 Congress is due to be held in Bulgaria, and those for 2013, 2014 and 2015 Congresses are expected to take place in Japan, France and China respectively.

#### **Annual Dinner**

On the evening of 5 February 2011 (to which day the event had been postponed from its scheduled date in December) Dr. Murtagh presided over the Annual Dinner, held for a second year at the Law Society, Blackhall Place. Dr. Kenneth Ferguson proposed the toast to the Society's guests. Major-General Dave Ashe responded on behalf of the guests. The occasion attracted a hundred diners, and was organised by a committee under the chairmanship of Commandant Martin Lenihan.