

# FEDERATION OF LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETIES

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2011

KILMALLOCK, CO. LIMERICK

## Meetings

We had three committee meetings since the last AGM. Collins Barracks had proven a good venue for several reasons including cost /accessibility. However we did have some problems booking it due to some internal staff issues within the museum. Our last meeting was held in the Teachers' Club in Parnell Square and it proved to be satisfactory. We may have to review the situation with regard to future bookings. The meetings were well attended and I would like to thank the committee members for making the effort to attend and their commitment during the year.

## Activities: North/South

Joint events and contact between the two Federations continues to be an integral part of our programme and enjoyed great support from all quarters. The Urban Experience project, when members from both Federations met in Naas, Co. Kildare, proved a great success. More than 70 people enjoyed the day which began with a Civic reception by the Town Mayor, Cllr. Seamie Moore in the unique old Town Hall.

Naas local historians, Paddy Behan and Liam Kenny, narrated the chequered history of the town from its origins to the present day. This was followed by a guided historical walk of the town. The mediaeval history and the influence of the early Anglo-Normans settlers were evident during the tour.

Lunch was in Lawlor's Hotel, a famous landmark in the Town being an eminent "ballroom of romance" in the 50's and 60's. In the afternoon the group was taken on a memorable visit to Palmerstown House, the ancestral home of the 6th. Earl of Mayo, Richard Southwell Bourke, locally remembered as the "Pickled Earl". Courtesy of owner Jim Mansfield and guided by his secretary Rita Keogh the visitors were afforded an absorbing afternoon in this beautiful and exquisitely restored big house.

The exceptional day ended with tea/coffee/scones at Lawlor's Hotel before all bid each other *adieu*. Many old friendships had been renewed and new ones formed.

## Hidden Gems

There is still a very slow uptake on the project after the initial success but we would ask societies who have not been involved to look at it and come on board. CD's available.

I had the pleasure of attending two interesting seminars held by the FULS. One was on "Townlands" and the importance of holding on to them and another on "Historical Commemoration" a thought provoking subject at the best of times. Both subjects might be worth looking at as possible topics for the Federation sometime in the future.

One disappointment was the failure to hold the Joint seminar we had planned with the FULS in April. Unfortunately we did not have enough support to justify running it especially from the North. We are not sure why but may have to reflect on the advisability of running a one day seminar involving just a series of lectures without any visit involved.

## History Review

We managed to publish our annual "History Review". It was late this year due to the slowness of getting material from members. We would ask groups to be more proactive in providing material for what is a very important publication for the Federation. Special thanks to Frank Taaffe for his great work and dedication, as always, in getting it out. His efforts are much appreciated.

## Autumn Seminar

*Historical Research and Preservation of Local Archives.* The seminar was held in the National Museum at Collins Barracks and proved to be a great success. The subject attracted a large audience of local historians who attended from all over the country. The attendance was in excess of 50 and 30 history groups were represented on the day.

Liam Kenny, Chairman of the General Council of County Councils gave an excellent talk on, "The development of local government in Ireland and its published histories". This was followed by a most informative presentation by Bridget Loughlin, Heritage Officer, Co. Kildare on "The Role of Local Authorities" in Resourcing Local History Projects.

After lunch the seminar continued with another most interesting and thought provoking lecture by Mario Corrigan, Local Historian and Head of Local History Dept., Kildare County Library. Mario talked about "Identifying, Recording and Preserving Public and Private Archives for Historical Research Purposes".

The final presentation was given by Ronan Colgan, from History Press Dublin. Ronan captivated his audience with a talk "Publishing Local History – A Guide for Local historians."

The talks generated a great response from the audience with many interesting questions and answers being shared by all.

### **Grandparents Project**

We encouraged groups to get involved in this project. I would like to compliment Frank Taaffe who did manage to get a project going in Athy with the local primary school. I had the pleasure of attending the final presentations and it was a real tonic to see and hear the school children and their grandparents share in the fruits of the project. Frank will tell us more about it at the Society Spake.

### **Web**

We have had some success in that we did manage to set up a temporary Web Blog and have been posting material on it. We still plan to establish a permanent new website. Our real challenge is that when we do set it up that we get the members to use it to communicate and share information. I would like to thank Kieran Hoare for the work he has done so far.

### **Newsletter**

We published one newsletter during the year but did not manage to follow up on that initial success. It was quite a detailed document and maybe it would be more appropriate to publish a shorter newsletter on a more frequent basis. cf. FULS. We would welcome some debate on that, maybe, during the *Society Spake*.

### **Membership**

We have managed to build up a reasonable database of members' e-mail addresses. This can be used to speed up and improve communication with the membership. More work is needed to fine tune the data and ensure that it is up to date and accurate. We plan to make a big push on this in conjunction with the development of the Web in the coming year.

## **Thoughts for 2011- 2012**

Continue to encourage and promote the joint North/South activities.

Improve communications. Develop better use of the web and improve communications between HQ and members and also encourage more interaction between groups.

Further develop the data base of all Federation member groups to include phone contact and e-mail addresses.

Encourage societies to use the local media, press and radio, to promote the local history message.

Recommend that groups within a county investigate the possibility of a county grouping to help stimulate group to group interaction or indeed look at the possibility of several regional groupings.

Suggest we might give consideration to the Autumn Seminar being on the subject of "Recording Oral History"

### **UK Trip:**

Consider the possibility of organising a visit to the UK (York) on similar lines to the European visit last year.

### **Thanks:**

Just like to say thanks to all the committee who have worked so hard and done a great job during the year and for their continued support. Also thanks to all the societies and their members for supporting the Federation in its activities. It is all very much appreciated.