

Minutes of the AGM of the Federation of Local History Societies

Date: 9th May 2015

Venue: Trident Hotel, Kinsale.

Delegates were welcomed by the chairman Dick Ryan who introduced Cork Co. Mayor Cllr. Alan Coleman who officially opened the AGM. The Mayor commented on the appropriateness of holding the AGM in Kinsale on the centenary of the sinking of the *Lusitania*. He commended the local voluntary groups who gave of their time and energy to make the commemorations a success, also Fáilte Ireland for their involvement. He commented on the valuable work done by the Federation and historical societies in actively looking at the past for future generations. He encouraged local history societies to work with Co. Heritage Officers.

Minutes: The Minutes of the AGM Clontarf, Dublin, May 2014 were taken as read.

Chairman's Address: delivered by Dick Ryan, copy appended

Secretary's Report: Delivered by Betty Quinn, copy appended.

Treasurer's Report: Delivered by Mairead Byrne, copy appended.

Election of Officers: It was agreed by consensus to return the current officers and committee members.

New Committee Members:

Clare O'Halloran, Cork Historical and Archaeological Society, elected on the proposal of Larry Breen and seconded by Brendan Cullen.

Eamon Leonard, Old Athlone Society, elected on the proposal of Jim Dockery and seconded by Larry Breen.

The Federation for Ulster Local Studies:

The Chairman read a letter from John Dooher Chairman of the Federation for Ulster Local Studies, expressing his apologies for his non availability at the AGM. He commented on how welcoming and invigorating he found the Federations AGM's. He believes that both federations have been very proactive in developing a greater rapport and deeper understanding between the two memberships. He realises there will be challenges and opportunities in the years ahead in maintaining and reinforcing that togetherness, particularly as the Decade of Commemoration unfolds. The overseas visits and joint seminars is a strong endorsement of the close relationship that has grown and strengthened over recent years.

Doreen McBride on behalf of the FULS spoke of the fear and apprehension that still exists for both communities on crossing the border, she is grateful for the good friends she has made in the Federation and the happy memories shared on the joint trips.

AOB:

Larry Breen encouraged delegates to purchase the journal, He announced the next trip to England early April 2016 to Stratford and Warwick, the joint North/South trip to Antrim and Down is on 4th July He expressed his concern regarding the difficulty society members have in securing seats especially for the UK trip. Currently its on a first come first served basis, he appealed for feed-back from delegates as to how to improve the situation.

Kevin Troy, Cloyne Society suggested each society should take 10 journals, (2 free) to sell at their respective events through-out the year.

Society Spake chaired by Larry Breen:

Jim Dockery, Roscommon, spoke of their annual tour to Wicklow concluding in Kildare where Larry Breen and Brendan Cullen were very affable tour guides. They hold 6 lectures per year with extra tours and lectures in Heritage week. They continue to have difficulty in keeping the Local History Museum open, despite being supported by a Tus scheme. They have produced over a 100 oral history recordings which are kept in the local library, they also produced a DVD last year.

Michael Gaynor, Old Dundalk, mentioned their Golden Jubilee last year, when they had several events including a town walk which attracted a crowd of over 250. They also had gold and silver plated coins minted and concluded with a celebration dinner. Being financially secure the society is in a position to buy artefacts relating to Co. Louth when they come available on eBay etc. They subsequently deposit them in the Co. Library, their recent finds are a sword belonging to the Louth Militia and a ship's bell from the Dundalk Steam Packet Co.

Brendan Cullen, Clane, spoke of their activities during Heritage Week when they mount a photographic exhibition in the local library. They also have an oral history archive and hold monthly meetings. They are about to publish the 4th edition of their journal "Coiseanna".

Alison Dunne, Knocklyon, spoke of their small but active society with 60 members. They hold 9 talks annually, their Christmas one being delivered by members. One memorable talk last year was delivered by Michael Laffan on his book on WT Cosgrave. Liam Cosgrave who lives in the parish attended the talk and said a few words. Last year's very enjoyable trip was to Limerick.

Aidan Clarke, Westport, spoke of the re-opening of their Heritage Centre following flood damage last year. They produce an annual journal and conduct town walks for schools and the visiting public. They are planning an exhibition of Mayo's involvement in the 1916 Rising for next year.

Peter Connell, Navan, spoke of their society, founded in 2007 with 100 members, they hold 8 or 9 annual talks and produce a biannual journal now working on their 3rd edition, another of their publications is "The Bridges of Navan". They engage very much with social media and have a very good website – navanhistory.ie their society is campaigning for a County Museum to be established in Navan. Presently they are conducting research on public housing in provincial towns from 1890 – 1945.

Art..... Benburb spoke of his society's great friendship with the Kinsale society and of their reciprocal visits. They have members on both sides of the border. He mentioned Shirley McKay and Lila Jackson from The Moy who have been instrumental in producing their journal for the last 30 years. Art's job is to welcome visiting societies world- wide, which he considers a privilege and totally rewarding.

Clare O'Halloran, Cork Historical and Archaeological, celebrated their centenary and is looking for new members. They produce a journal with articles on history and archaeology both from academics and amateurs. They are presently digitising their journals and are now up to 1941. Their lectures are held in winter, the annual county lecture this year was held in Mitchelstown. There are 70 local history societies in Co. Cork. They hold outings only for members in summer, this year they took a tour of The Mardyke in Cork city. They have one week-end away annually, this year is to Galway, where they will link

up with the local society. They hold a biannual conference, next year the topic is the 1916 Rising.

A.....O'Connell, Thomand Archaeological, they have 450 members and produce an annual journal, hold lectures in winter, have outings in Summer and go abroad on short trips.

Beatrice, Waterford Archaeological and Historical, they hold a series of lectures in winter and go on outings in summer. For their annual outing this year they are joining up with a Probus group and are going to Dublin and Kildare, taking in Castletown House and the Military Museum in The Curragh. Their annual membership is €25 which includes the journal. This year they are celebrating the production of 40 years of their journal and are planning an event in Heritage Week where they will look at past productions and talk to contributors. They have young members joining their society and are securing young graduates to deliver lectures.

Eamon Leonard, Old Athlone, their society is about to celebrate its Golden Jubilee, Previously they held lectures in the local hotel, last year they took a decision to use buildings with a significant attachment to the town , thus creating awareness of the antiquity that is on the door step i.e. Lough Ree Yacht Club, the oldest in the country. Eamon will deliver a lecture on the Lusitania concentrating on its connections with the midlands.

LilaCloyne, their society have 40 members and hold talks in winter. This year their annual outing is to Longfield House. They are holding a seminar on the bicentenary of St. Colmans church. They have a facebook page which they find excellent for transmitting information. Presently they are conducting research on family names.

Pat..... Bandon, Their society was founded in 1979. Through-out the year they hold 10 lectures and 5 outings, this year's outing was to Waterford. They are planning a special lecture on 1916, for Heritage Week in August they are planning celebrations around their walled town. They produce an annual journal and are now at no. 31. Their society is in the process of indexing their journals.

Claire Cullinane, Cobh, Clare started the *Female Story* with Cobh Animation Team in conjunction with local historian John Hennessy. The stories are told through fashion. The team have 20 ladies and 10 children. In Kinsale the idea is to tell the story of the Lusitania through the costumes that were worn by the ladies on the voyage. The animation team is available for any event, costume wise, societies may have in mind.

....., **Whitegate**, their society is established for 25 years and have 24 mature members. Their annual subscription is €10, they hold lectures in winter and outings in summer, they are joining with Cloyne for their annual outing, they also conduct walks to local sights. They also join with Cloyne for the *Cork Celebrates History* event. They have produced a book of photographs of the local area and are now on their second edition. They are Friends of Cloyne Cathedral and do voluntary work i.e. restoring seats etc.

.....**Youghal**, spoke of the discovery of documentation found in Germany 14 years ago identifying the Medieval Monastery in Youghal. Their annual conference this year is on the Quaker Society. Their hits are increasing on social media. Their society is researching the history of the Fitzgeralds.

.....**Limerick**, Their society was founded in 2014 and have 72 members, they hold 8 lectures annually but have difficulty securing lecturers as all local societies are picking from the same pool. They are also finding difficulty in attracting young members.

Dick Ryan, Rathmichael, 75 members, they hold 12 lectures annually with a series of lectures one week in August, their topic for the series this year is *“What has History and Archaeology ever done for us.”* Their last annual trip was to Carlow.

Martina Griffin, Moate, spoke of their society founded in 1972. Founder members gathered artefacts over the years and their collection is now on display in their newly restored museum, which is opened on request, but is fully opened for Heritage Week. They open during term for school tours. They hold 6 lectures annually. They notice an interest by local foreign nationals in local history.

Mairead Byrne Rathcoffey History Group, they are a small group with 20 members founded in 2006. They hold 6 lectures annually. They amalgamated with 4 smaller groups for their annual outing last year which was to Kilkenny, Clonmacnoise and Castletown House. 4 local societies get together to celebrate the birthday of St. Mochua who is the patron saint of the area. Recently they produced a DVD which recorded interviews with local residents on their recollections of life in the 1950's and '60's. At the subsequent launch they were more than surprised to find the younger audience willing to record their experience and more importantly their aspirations for the future. They also had a performance in song and story on the folk tales of Kildare by two young Kildare storytellers.

Canon Sean O'Doherty, Kilkenny spoke of his involvement in several societies. He mentioned a lecture given by David Davidson to the South Kilkenny society on the photographic collection of Fr.

Brown SJ, there are over 40,000 negatives in this collection, an idea for the hidden gems project might be to research and compare landscape images then and now.

Betty Quinn, Old Drogheda founded in 1964, have 300 members, hold 4 lectures in autumn, 4 in spring, 4 local evening outings in summer and one day away. This year's topic for the John Boyle O'Reilly Autumn School is The 1916 Rising. They manage Drogheda Museum which is supported by community employment and has attained full accreditation on the Heritage Council's Standards Programme, the first institution voluntarily run to reach such standards.

Conclusion:

This concluded the business of the meeting. Larry thanked delegates for attending and outlined the activities for the afternoon which included a seminar on the Lusitania and a visit to the restored Signal House at the Old Head of Kinsale.

Betty Quinn secretary FLSH

