

Maynooth University and St. Patrick's College Retired Staff Association

News-sheet Autumn 2022

AGM for 2021

The 2021 AGM of the Maynooth Retired Staff Association was held on April 28th in the Hunting Room, Castletown House, Celbridge. Those in attendance received reports from each of the Committee members and, following discussion, all reports were approved. The AGM approved Revisions to the Rules of the Association including the Rules for Associate members – draft copies of the proposed revisions had been circulated to all members prior to the AGM. Due to the restrictions related to COVID-19 on the activities of the Association it was agreed that the membership fee for 2022 should be €10 and for 2023 €15. The Treasurer reported the finances were in a healthy state, particularly due to the inactivity over the last two years. The Membership Secretary reported that in 2022 the RSA had welcomed ten new or re-joining members/associate members: Maire Adderley, Abdullahi El-Tom, Olive Morrin, Pauline Murray, Linda O'Connell, Michael O'Dwyer, Dan O'Shea, Margaret O'Shea, Valerie Payne, Arnd Witte.

The AGM also re-elected the out-going Committee members for another year. The Committee members for 2022 are:

Chairperson:	Jim Walsh
Treasurer:	Mary Weld
Secretary:	Mary Corbally
Membership Secretary:	Richard Watson
Events Secretary:	Marie-Therese Power
Communications Officer:	Séamas Ó Síocháin

The AGM was followed by a celebration of the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Retired Staff Association which was also attended by some Associate members. Mary Weld who was one of the founders provided a very informative historical review of how the Association has developed and the wide range of activities it has undertaken for the benefit of members. The members thanked Mary for her tireless commitment to the Association.



On the steps of Strokestown House – photo courtesy of Vincent Murphy

Resumption of Events

Following the decline in the risks associated with COVID, as more people availed of the vaccines, it became possible to safely organise some events over the summer. The first was an outing on 22nd June to the Shackleton Museum in Athy followed by a visit to the nearby renowned Ballintubbert Gardens. Twenty members, including two new members from the Library, took part in the outing. We were fortunate to have lovely weather which made our visit to Ballintubbert Gardens that bit more special. At the Shackleton Museum situated in the Athy Heritage Centre some of what we viewed included an original sledge and harness from Sir Ernest Shackleton's Antarctic expedition, the wonderful fifteen-foot model of Shackleton's ship *Endurance* plus an audio-visual display featuring Frank Hurley's original film footage of the *Endurance* exhibition. Following lunch, we visited Ballintubbert Gardens, the first organic certified ornamental gardens in Ireland. We were very fortunate to have a private tour of the gardens with the head gardener who took us through each section of the gardens; it was obvious how proud she was of the gardens and what could be achieved with a small, dedicated staff. The Rose Garden was alive with the wonderful scents and colours of the roses. Before leaving, with plenty of lively chat, we relaxed over freshly-made apple juice from the orchard's apples.



Ballintubbert Gardens Group – photo courtesy of Jim Walsh

Our next day out took eleven of our members to Collon House and the Irish Military War Museum on July 22nd both located in County Louth. Collon House, built in 1740, was the home of John ‘Speaker’ Foster, the last Speaker of the House of Commons until the Act of Union in 1800. All had a very relaxing time touring the house with Michael, one of the owners, who along with his partner have lovingly restored the house and small but beautiful gardens. Michael and his partner live in the house which gives it a special homely feel. Guests can stay throughout the year and are provided with home-cooked meals. That afternoon, the Irish Military War Museum was the next stop, just a short drive from Collon House. Nothing could have been more different, having come from a relaxing, peaceful location to a museum that houses tens of thousands of historic items from WW1, WW2, Gulf War, Vietnam War plus examples of trenches, motorized conflict of WW2, and an amazing collection of WW2 Allied and Axis vehicles and deactivated weapons. Bill, the owner, went through each section of the museum and had an amazing knowledge of everything within it. The museum while being extremely educational is a chilling reminder of how war destroys lives.

August 29th took us to Dublin City where fourteen members visited two venues in the Dublin Castle Complex, the museum of An Garda Síochána and the award-winning Chester Beatty Library. The Garda Museum was opened in 2015 to inform visitors of the past and present methods of policing in Ireland going back to before 1922. We had a very enjoyable visit with a young guide talking us through the very early years and a self-guided tour through the later years. We had a very enjoyable lunch with plenty of good -humoured chat in the Silk Road Café. We visited the Chester Beatty Library in the afternoon where

among the many interesting items on display was a beautiful drawing by the father of Augustus Pugin who was the architect for the Pugin buildings in Maynooth. This was something special for our associate member Jeanne Meldon, as Jeanne is a direct descendant of Pugin.



Lunch in the Silk Road Café, Chester Beatty Library – photo courtesy of Jim Walsh

On September 5th, 20 members travelled to Strokestown House and The National Irish Famine Museum where a special day awaited the group. The lovely weather facilitated the enjoyment of the grounds. The day started with coffee and scones in their café before visiting the Famine Museum. The group was very fortunate to have an excellent guide who made the tour so interesting with his wealth of knowledge on this sad part of Irish history. Lunch was enjoyed before visiting Strokestown House which is presently under major repair works. The rooms on the ground floor including the vast kitchen were suitable for viewing.

The guide, the same as in the museum, talked about the history of the house and the Mahon family who owned the house and estate from the late 17th century until 1981.

Very special thanks are due to Marie-Therese Power for organising each of these events.

Clubs

Knitting Club

The Knitting Club usually meet up once per fortnight during the winter months. As all classrooms, including the ones in the Students' Union have a constant turnover of students, it has been decided that it is too risky to meet up due to Covid. This decision will be reviewed again after Christmas.

While we all have our own knitting projects on hand, we also knit for two charities. Please feel free to knit little beanie hats and/or blankets, which we will continue to donate to the Coombe and Mullingar hospitals. You should also consider continuing to knit scarves and hats for the Simon Community of West Wicklow and Kildare. A full box of them was handed over last winter.

Members don't have to be members of the Knitting Club to knit for either of the above causes, and if you need details of what is required, please contact Mary Weld (086 3614387) or Mary Carthy (085 7231851). You can pass on any completed items to either of us and they will be given to the respective charities.

Keep Fit Club

Unfortunately, the premises belonging to the Community Council on the Dublin Road is no longer available to us. In the interim we would like to form a Walking Group. Our first meet up will take place on *either* Tuesday 4th or Wednesday 5th October, depending on which day suits most the best. We will meet in the Tesco Car Park Maynooth (between the Post Office and the Vegetable Shop) at 10.30 am, and will do a walk for approximately one hour. Please contact Mary Weld (086 3614387) if you are interested, and please indicate which day suits you best.

Book Club

The Book Club has not met since the onset of the Covid pandemic and it is only now with indications that the pandemic has spent its force that members are contemplating a restart. It is felt that an exploratory meeting of former members would help to address a few issues. Principal among these are (i) location and (ii) convenors. Our former meeting-place, the Glenroyal Hotel, was only marginally suitable and a new location would be desirable. Fresh blood in convening would also help. With the expansion in RSA membership, new members would also be very welcome. Contact Séamas Ó Síocháin (087) 437 6 437

Technology, Society and Innovation Building

In this News update we also note that the latest building on the university campus was officially opened by the Taoiseach on Sept 1st. The Technology, Society and Innovation building is a designed to incorporate the best approaches to environmental sustainability. It includes large theatres (largest can accommodate 500 students) and small teaching areas plus offices for the President, the Business School and the Department of Sociology. It more than doubles the total area of university buildings on the north campus. It is well worth a visit.

Retired Staff Benefits

The University Human Resources Office has recently published a document on Maynooth University Retired Staff Benefits (copy attached). The Committee of the Association worked with the HR Office in developing this policy document.

Future meetings

The Association plans to resume in-person meetings for all members as soon as suitable meeting place can be located. It is envisaged that some of the meetings will be following by short talks / lectures on topics of interest to the members.

Annual Fees

We would also remind members and associate members that the annual fee should now be paid, if it has not already been paid: a large part of the annual subscription is to cover the cost of insurance, which is essential once normal RSA activities resume. And, should you transfer fees to the RSA account, be sure to identify yourself as the sender.