



Meath Archaeological and Historical Society

Cumann Seandálaíochta agus Staire na Mí

President's Letter

Dear Member

3 February 2025

“On the curves of the briar the dews are set, And the cowslips are bent with their weights of bells”.
(F. Ledwidge, *A Spring's Day*)

With the tribulations of *Storm Éowyn* hopefully well and truly behind us, we dare to look forward to better days in Spring. We are delighted to present our 2025 programme, trusting you will enjoy this year's events and looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible in the months ahead.

On **Wednesday 26th March** we welcome you to the launch of *Ríocht na Midhe 2025*, in the Ardboyne Hotel, Navan (7.30pm). Archaeologist **Dr Geraldine Stout** (Patron) will perform the launch, and historian and broadcaster **Myles Dungan** will deliver a lecture entitled “It's All About the Land”. (*Book fair, journal distribution and reception for members and guests commence at 6.30pm*). Edited by Dr **Peter Connell**, *Ríocht na Midhe 2025* contains the usual wide range of scholarly articles on topics ranging from archaeology to 20th-century history. These include: a strikingly innovative interpretation of the astronomical and ritual significance of the three great passage tombs of Brú na Boinne by **Joe Fenwick**, a comprehensive account by **Seamus Bellew** of the heraldry associated with St Oliver Plunkett and his family (marking the 400th anniversary of the saint's birth), and a history of the early years of camogie in Co Meath by **Dr Jim Gilligan**. In addition, **Dr Lesa Ní Mhunghaile** writes about the history of Brú na Míche, an Irish-language hostel that operated in the newly established Baile Ghib colony in Co. Meath between 1937 and 1970, while Vikings at Navan, King Edward I and the Langfords of Summerhill are among the cast who feature in other articles.

Retirement: having served as Editor for 11 years, Peter has announced his intention to retire at the AGM. Fortunately he will continue to sit on our Council and contribute to the work of the Society - we thank him for his dedication and professionalism. Coincidentally this year we mark the **70th anniversary of *Ríocht na Midhe***: the first issue, edited by the late **Mrs M. Conway**, was published in 1955, and the Journal has gone from strength to strength. The Society is indebted to the succession of dedicated Editors who have produced this learned and well-respected journal, and to the historians and archaeologists, etc., who have contributed articles and news items, adding greatly to our knowledge of the “ancient Kingdom of Meath”.

- **Note:** a copy of the 2025 journal is included in your 25 euro subscription (due March 26th) and can be collected at the launch. While payments are accepted on the night (card facilities available), **prepayment makes it much simpler all round**. This can be done online or by post, using the enclosed form. Members unable to attend the launch should send the completed form and payment to the Hon. Treasurer, **David Douglas**, and the journal will be posted out on receipt.

Our next event is the **AGM on Tuesday 29th April** (Trim Library, 7.15pm). This year's business will include elections for the President and Vice-President as well as Officers and Council members. **We are in need of new Council members** - so if you are interested, let us know. The AGM will also include a motion to **raise the annual subscription to 30 euro** - a modest increase which we hope you will approve. Following the AGM, genealogist **Aileen Wynne** will give a presentation “*Who do you think you are? - A beginner's guide to genealogy*” - timely preparation for the Census 1926 returns!

Our very popular **Annual Excursion** takes place on **Saturday 21st June**. Organised by **Fiona Ahern**, this year's outing will visit some Co. Wexford sites, including guided tours of Johnstown Castle and Gardens, and Wexford town. *Early booking is recommended: a detailed programme and booking form will be available at the journal launch and email bookings can be addressed to: outing@mahs.ie.*

The **May to November** programme includes a range of evening talks and Sunday lectures. Talks in local libraries (7.30pm) include: "*The Hussey Barons of Galtrim*" (28th May, Dr **Caren Mulcahy**, Ashbourne), "*The Story of Old Mosney*" (29th July, **Colin Byrne**, Bettystown) and "*The Development of Oldcastle Town, 1650-1900*" (23 Sept, **Una Palcic**, Oldcastle). Sunday afternoon lectures (3pm) include: the *George Eogan Memorial lecture* on 19th October in Nobber when **Dr Michael Potterton** will speak on "*Forty Years On - Revisiting the Urban Archaeology Survey of County Meath*", and 30th November in Dalgan Park, when **Dr Edel Bhreathnach** (Patron) will speak on - "*Monasticism in Early Medieval Ireland - New Perspectives*".

COUNCIL: The Council and Officers have worked diligently over the year - overseeing the administration of the Society, running the annual programme, deliberating on heritage, planning and other queries coming before us, and dealing with the many challenges that arise. Despite some unavoidable schedule changes, the 2024 programme was very successful: a superb journal, a very well-attended launch, 8 lectures, 1 seminar (Discovery Programme at Tara), the annual excursion, a guided tour of Townley Hall, and a field trip to the monument at Sonairte. Grateful thanks to all our speakers, guides, and host venues, and special thanks to Dr **Muiris O'Sullivan** for stepping in at short notice to deliver the George Eogan Lecture.

Representation: Council members represented the Society on bodies such as the County Heritage Forum, the Meath History Workshop, and the THRIVE Town Team (Navan Cultural Quarter - Community Hub and County Archive - restoration of the former St Patrick's Classical School). The Society was also represented at conferences run by the TII, RIA, ARINS, Meath Co Council, Ivy Committee (Parnell Society), Archaeology Ireland, at the Discovery Programme's 'Frameworks for Archaeological Research' webinar, and at celebrations marking the 800th anniversary of the Dominicans in Ireland (in St Patrick's Church, Trim). We also supported a number of local heritage endeavours, including the Seán Corcoran Festival in Drogheda, and were invited to address students at Dunboyne College of Further Education.

George Eogan Memorial Prize: the Society's travel research prize in archaeology was awarded to **Deborah Buchanan**, an archaeology student at UCD, who is pursuing research on 'Moynagh Points' - stone artefacts dating to the late Mesolithic/Early Neolithic deriving their name from Moynagh Lough, Co. Meath.

Succession planning: as a voluntary society we need to plan for succession. While we have been fortunate in having members prepared to dedicate their time and efforts as Council members and Officers, the team needs regular renewal, especially with some long-standing members retiring. At the 2024 AGM, we welcomed new Council member, Aileen Wynne, and we would like to see some more nominations this year.

Members Survey: As we look to the future, we want to ensure that the Society remains relevant, responsive, and sustainable. In order to better understand our members' needs, preferences, and priorities we are preparing a survey which will be circulated at the launch and AGM, and also posted on the website. This will help us make informed decisions about our activities, events, and resources while addressing the challenges of volunteer capacity. *We urge you to take part in the survey - your feedback will be a great help.*

Thanks: I take this opportunity to thank the Council members and officers for giving their valuable time, expertise and energy to the work of the Society. A special thanks is due to Meath Co. Council, the County Librarian, Co. Archivist, and the Co. Library service for their support and assistance (including financial assistance towards the publication of the Journal, and facilitating talks and meetings at local libraries). On a personal note, as I retire from the Presidency at the AGM, I would like to thank my fellow Council members for their kindness and encouragement, and you our members for your friendship and support.

Yours sincerely,
Julitta Clancy, President, MAHS