

75 YEARS OF MILITARY HISTORY

The Military History Society of Ireland was founded in 1949 with the objective of studying warfare in Ireland and Irishmen in war (since enlarged to include the general study of military history). Initially its period of study was confined to the pre-twentieth century, but this has now expanded to take in more modern topics, such as Irish military involvement with the United Nations. In the aftermath of the Emergency and World War II, the Society successfully brought together veterans of all Irish military traditions. However, from the outset, much of its leadership and administration has been provided by members of the Defence Forces, serving and retired. Since 1963 successive Presidents of Ireland have graciously accepted the Society's invitation to become its patron. Support has come from the Department of Defence as well as UCD and the Department of Foreign Affairs. The Society is affiliated to the International Commission for Military History.

The Society's greatest achievement has been the publication of its bi-annual, illustrated journal *The Irish Sword*, which successfully blends scholarship with accessibility. 136 issues have appeared to date, totalling over 13,000 pages, which is by far the greatest volume of information and comment on Irish military history ever published. The Society has offered an annual lecture programme, which has delivered over 500 lectures. The Society is fortunate to enjoy the up-to-date lecturing facilities provided by Griffith College. A recent, welcome development has been to make lectures available to a wider audience through zoom. Eight two-day conferences have been run largely dealing with the Defence Forces and the Decade of Commemoration. Twice a year the Society tours military-history related locations in Ireland, such as battle sites, military structures and military museums.

From the start, the Society developed a strong international dimension by taking full account of the many Irish men and women associated with military life abroad. Their experience has been studied on overseas tours to Britain, to many locations in mainland Europe, including the Ukraine and Turkey, and to the United States and South Africa. The first overseas tour in 1965 was to the site of the battle of Fontenoy (1745) in Belgium and the most recent last September visited the Normandy landings in France (1944). On tours and other occasions, the Society has laid wreaths at commemorative memorials to fallen Irish soldiers.