

MILITARY HISTORY SOCIETY OF IRELAND

Survey of Members' Attitudes 2017 Final Report

1. GENERAL

A survey was carried out of all ordinary/life members of the society to obtain their opinions as to how well the Society meets its aims and, in particular, how it meets the needs and desires of its members.

A 4-page questioner was posted to all members. It was divided into 12 sections or topics covering the following:

Irish Sword	Winter Lecture Programme	Conferences
Library	Annual General Meeting	Annual Dinner
Summer Weekend Tour	Autumn Field Day	WE/FD Time Preference
Overseas Tour	Communications/Social Media	Reasons for being a member

In addition, members were asked to state where they resided.

About 570 survey forms were issued to ordinary/life members; this excluded institutional and similar type members. About 470 were sent to addresses in Ireland and about 100 to addresses overseas.

Responses were received from 95 (17%) members. Of the responses, 82 (86%) came from Ireland and 13 (14%) came from overseas. That's a return rate of 17.4% from Ireland and 13% from overseas. A response rate of 17% might be considered good; however, it was disappointing to note that a significant number of members who do attend activities of the Society did not respond.

2. RESPONSES ANALYSED BY AREA

Of the 95 responses, 40% came from Dublin; 11.6% from the rest of the Greater Dublin Area¹ (r/GDA); 34.7% from the rest of Ireland (r/Ireland); and 13.7% from Overseas. Our ordinary/life membership breaks down as follows: Dublin 50%; Rest of Ireland (r/GDA & r/Ireland) 35%; and Overseas 15%. So, the responses give a fair representation of members by reference to where they reside and what the particular requirements they have of the Society.

Of the 82 responses received from Ireland, 46.3% came from Dublin; 13.4% from r/GDA; and 40.3% from r/Ireland.

3. WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPAL REASONS YOU ARE MEMBER OF THE MHSI?

A total of 236 reasons were given in response to this question. The most popular reason given was the Irish Sword. Of the 95 returns received, 80 members (84%) cited this as a reason for being a member. Understandably, it was the reason given by 100% of Overseas members, falling to 68% in the case of Dublin based members. The Winter Lecture Programme was the second most popular reason overall, but was the most popular, at 89%,

¹ The rest of the GDA included counties Wicklow, Kildare, Meath and Louth within commuting distance of Dublin. It was considered that members in these areas would be more likely to access events organised in, near or commencing in Dublin and that this factor would be worth considering in the analysis of responses.

among Dublin based members. One respondent did not give a reason. A breakdown by reason and region is set out in Table 1.

Reason	Dublin	r/GDA	r/Ireland	Overseas	Total
Irish Sword	26 (68%)	9 (82%)	32 (97%)	13 (100%)	80 (84%)
Lectures	34 (89%)	8 (73%)	9 (27%)	2 (15%)	53 (56%)
Irish Tours/Field-Days	25 (66%)	9 (82%)	6 (18%)	3 (23%)	43 (45%)
Overseas Tours	14 (37%)	6 (55%)	6 (18%)	2 (15%)	28 (29%)
Annual Dinner	8 (21%)	5 (45%)	2 (6%)	1 (8%)	16 (17%)
Other	6 (16%)	4 (36%)	4 (12%)	2 (15%)	16 (17%)
Total	113 (47.6%)	41 (17.6%)	59 (24.9%)	23 (9.9%)	236

Others reasons included interest in military/family history (5); meeting people (with similar interests) (6); education (1); great value/support society (2); follow in father's footsteps (1).

Of the cumulative number (236) of opinions stated, 113 (47.6%) came from Dublin; 41 (17.6%) from r/GDA; 24.9% from r/Ireland; and 9.9% from Overseas.

The top three reasons given by members, i.e. Irish Sword, Lectures and Irish Tours/Field-days correspond to where the Society puts most of its resources. How well it is doing it will be clearer from an analysis of answers from other questions in the survey.

Response by Council

Council is satisfied that most of its resources are concentrated on those areas which are of greatest interest/importance to its members and this will continue to be a guiding principle in planning its programmes into the future. It is also satisfied that all its current activities should continue so long as members support them. No new activities were suggested in the survey.

4. IRISH SWORD

A breakdown of the responses received in relation to the Irish Sword is set out in Table 2.

	Yes	No	Nil
Happy with Layout/Style	86 (91%)	9 (9%) ²	1 (1%)
Happy with Content	81 (85%)	9 (9%) ³	5 (6%)
Happy with Quality of Articles	86 (91%)	3 (3%) ⁴	6 (6%)
Changes or Improvements	15 (16%)	0 (0%)	80 (84%)

Comments on Layout

- Requires some modernisation e.g. quality of paper used.
- Would like to see more contemporary articles.
- A little dated, but does the job.
- Better layout required.
- More narrative; too many subtitles.
- Would prefer it in a larger magazine style.
- Would be reluctant to see any change.

² 7 from Dublin; 2 from r/Ireland.

³ 6 from Dublin; 3 from r/Ireland. Responses were not received in 5 cases.

⁴ 3 from r/Ireland. Responses were not received in 6 cases.

- Likes tactility.
- The traditional style & layout warrants examination.
- Not happy with layout; illustrations and maps inadequate.

Comments on Content

- More 20th century history would be appreciated.
- Would prefer more 19th & 20th century content.
- Would like to see more contemporary articles.
- Requires a better balance between 20th century and pre-20th century warfare.
- Much of content is dry and esoteric. Trend towards concentration on social and peripheral issues connected with war rather than war itself.
- (Likes) .. but getting bored with Great War over-indulgence.
- More writing in easy style (required?)
- Some articles are too obscure.
- Some more naval articles/more on naval warfare (x 2)
- Not enough "Irish" especially since the "90s" when British became fashionable.
- More content with earlier periods, e.g. 13th – 15th century; and content focussed on South-West (Cork/Kerry).
- Would like more up-to-date material.
- Would like more modern history.
- Less interested in post-19th century history.
- Variety is its strength. More on Irishmen on Imperial duty in Asia.
- Mainly interested in WW1 articles.
- Too academic - more diversity required

Comments on Quality of Articles

- There should have been articles about 1916 Rising and now war of Independence.
- Perhaps more context re articles.
- Too academic - more editorial input required to 'lighten' the context.
- Mixed in terms of quality.
- Some are immensely instructive.

Note: The above comments do not include those which were complimentary in their praise of the layout, content and quality, of which there were many, of the Sword.

Changes and Improvements Suggested

- Digitisation and online publication.
- Objects to branding high ranking Officers who are born in Ireland (but in foreign armies) being branded as Irishmen - remember Wellington and stables. They were not of us.
- Satisfied as currently presented.
- Perhaps larger format publication.
- Should be on JSTOR for easy search and for prestige; Better quality illustrations required; Date on spine required. [JSTOR provides access to more than 10 million academic journal articles, books, and primary sources in 75 disciplines].
- End notes.
- International comparisons.
- More pictures.
- Wants English translations of quotations in foreign languages.
- Excellent as it is.
- I am a contributor of articles. Would not like to see introduction of moderation of articles.

- Comprehensive index would be helpful.
- An online version would help. Also, a searchable catalogue and back-issue online.
- Issue three times a year.

Summary/Comments by Council

As can be seen from paragraph 3 above, the Irish Sword is the main reason why people are members of the Society. Of the 95 responses received, 91% stated they were happy with the Layout and Style; 82% with the Content; and 86% with the Quality of the Articles. A total of 45 made submissions under the heading of “*Improvements or Changes they would like to see*” in the Sword. In addition, a majority of members also made comments relating to the main questions under this heading. Most of these were very positive and favourable and so will not generally be referred to elsewhere in this document other than to thank those who made such comments on behalf of the editorial team and the various contributors.

Response by Council

Other than taking your comments and suggestions into consideration by the Editorial Committee, no significant changes are proposed.

5. WINTER LECTURE PROGRAMME

A breakdown of the responses received in relation to the Winter Lecture Programme is set out in Table 3. Detailed comments are set out after the Table.

Table 3 - Winter Lecture Programme										
	Do you attend				Happy with Quality			Happy with Subject Matter		
	R	O	N	X	Y	N	X	Y	N	X
Dublin	11	24	3	-	31	-	7	31	3	4
r/GDA	2	8	1	-	7	-	4	9	-	2
r/Ireland	2	9	22	-	11	-	22	11	-	22
Overseas	0	2	11	-	2	-	11	2	-	11
Total (95)	15	43	37	-	51	-	44	53	3	39

R = Regularly; O = Occasionally; N = Never/No; Y = Yes; X = No response

Do you attend?

Comments made by you were:

- I attend if subject matter is military, but not if it's social or other, e.g. military service pensions.
- I live too far away.
- Consider some outside Dublin, day-time and Saturday lectures.

Are you generally satisfied with the quality of the lectures?

Comments made by you on were:

- (Generally happy) ... but the quality of delivery of lecture can be poor on occasions.
- Amplification needs to be used at all times.
- Generally, yes. Do select lecturers which are of interest. Visual content sometimes poor.
- Ensure speakers can be heard - some do not project their voice.

Are you generally satisfied with the subject matters of the lectures?

Comments made by you were:

- Would welcome more 20th century topics.

- Much of content is dry and esoteric. Trend towards concentration on social and peripheral issues connected with war rather than war itself.
- If the speakers could give more political context.
- (Generally happy)but more recent topics would be even better.
- Mainly interested in WW1.

Do you have any suggestions in relation to topics, locations and/or speakers?

Comments made by you were:

- Would welcome if nearer home (i.e. outside Dublin!).
- Lectures should be repeated at other locations nationally.
- Some lectures should take place outside of Dublin.
- Consider some outside Dublin, day-time and Saturday lectures.
- Too far to travel. Consider other venues e.g. Sligo, Belfast.
- Hold at least one lecture per annum in rural Ireland, in county museums.
- Suggest Dr Donard de Cogan. He is very knowledgeable on the History of the Irish Army, particularly signals and communications in general.
- Suggest lectures on history of military technology.
- Make text of lectures available online.
- Would prefer location more easily reached by public transport but car parking important for a friend. Griffith College is OK but Collins Barracks would be even better.
- Locations outside Dublin.
- More 19th & 20th century content.
- Move some lectures to venues outside Dublin and bring regional focus to the content, drawing a younger audience.
- Record lectures & post on YouTube. He (the respondent) will assist with technical issues.
- More international speakers.
- Use email to advise members of topics and speakers.
- Dr Brian Hanley - leading authority on Northern Ireland troubles and security. Also, look at PhD or graduates from collages.
- More lectures relating to Middle Ages. Requests facility to obtain copy of lecture or to have it published in Sword.
- Irish Castles, Tower Houses, 16th & 17th century Irish History, Peninsular War, Irishmen sent to fight in the West Indies to protect the sugar plantations for the English against the French.
- More modern topics.
- Not happy with the room where the lectures are held.
- Consider topics from mid to late 20th century.
- Ensure speakers can be heard - some do not project their voice.

What might entice you to attend or attend more regularly?

Comments made by you were:

- Hold on Thursday night. Video record; put on web site for members only; Podcast.
- Hold on other than Friday nights; that's when I go out with wife.
- Nearer home or at earlier time so those outside Dublin can get home at reasonable time.
- Distance - don't live in Dublin.
- Living down the country.
- Distance from Dublin and health.

- Too far to travel - too Dublin based.
- Coming from the North, lectures are too late to get last train home. 7pm start would suit.
- Used to attend regularly when I lived in Bray, but now live in Co Down. If lectures were in afternoon, I would attend.
- Too far to travel. Consider other venues e.g. Sligo, Belfast.
- Attend when topic is of interest to me.
- If you held them in Letterkenny or near to there.
- Temporary health problem.
- Can clash with other commitments.
- Change from a Friday night.
- Don't like travelling in evening.
- Change from Fridays.
- A few lectures outside the "Pale". Current location is inconvenient.
- Have not got around to it
- Family commitments.
- Hold lectures in the North.
- Amplification!
- Locations outside Dublin.
- Age.
- Griffith difficult to (get to?). Prefer if in McKee or Cathal Brugha.
- If some were held in Ulster. New venue with access (to) enjoy food/drink.
- Distance. Also, have hearing loss - lectures are a struggle; rely on written word.
- Try a more central (national) location, e.g. Athlone. I live in Galway.
- I live in London.
- Hold some in the North.
- A member of too many competing groups.
- Distance (is a problem) x 3.
- Health reasons prevent more regular attendance.
- Lives in Canada
- Attendance subject to availability.
- At that time of year, attending would require an overnight stay. Would be better if some lectures were held in the North.
- Retirement.
- Family commitments prevent me from attending as often as possible.
- Would like to attend but live abroad.
- Work commitments make it difficult to attend.
- Unable to attend.
- Use varied locations.
- Bad /non-existent amplification a problem.
- Fridays don't suit me (TGIF).
- Cup of tea/chat afterwards.
- Fridays can clash with other appointments.

What, if any, improvements would you like to see?

- Nearer home or at earlier time so those outside Dublin can get home at reasonable time.
- Distance – don't live in Dublin.
- Too far to travel – too Dublin based.
- Too far to travel. Consider other venues e.g. Sligo, Belfast

- Can clash with other commitments.
- Poor amplification
- Locations outside Dublin.
- If some were held in Ulster. New venue with access to enjoy food/drink.
- Attendance related to availability.
- Cup of tea/ chat afterwards.

Summary/Comments by Council.

As can be seen from paragraph 3 above, the Winter Lecture Programme is the second most popular reason why you are a member of the Society. Of those of you who live in the Greater Dublin Area, 58 attend these lectures on a regular basis and a further 13 who live in the rest of Ireland or overseas do so.

The survey confirms Council's view that the lectures are popular, very well attended and form a vital part of the business of the Society. All 51 (53.6%) of you who expressed an opinion on the quality of the lectures, stated that you were satisfied. Council is very encouraged by that. The editorial team will give consideration to the various comments made.

All 95 of you answered the question "Do you attend?" 15 (15.8%) of you stated that you attended on a regular basis; 43 (45.3%) that you attended occasionally; and 37 (38.9%) that you never attended. (The latter figure includes those who do not reside near Dublin or in Ireland). A combined figure of 58 (61.1%) of you attend regularly or occasionally and this includes 23 (24.28%) of you who reside outside Dublin

The most common suggestion made by you (19 or 41%) was that some lecturers should be held outside Dublin. There were 11 comments made under other headings to similar effect.

Other suggestions included changing the day of the lecture (4); changing the time (3); providing adequate amplification (2); topics (1); use of online/video to record lectures (1); a change of location within Dublin (1). In addition, 13 of you stated that you were unable to attend because of other commitments, health and age issues or you were living abroad. One suggested a cup of tea and a chat after the lecture.

Similar to comments under other headings, suggestions for lectures to be held outside Dublin dominated.

A total of 53.7% stated that they were satisfied with the quality of the lectures; no one stated that they were unhappy. 55.7% of you stated that you were satisfied with the subject matters of the lectures; only 3.2% told us you were not.

A total of 24 of you made comments. The most common matter raised by you (10) was a desire to see some lectures take place outside of Dublin. (A further 21 of you expressed similar views under the questions "Do you attend" and "what might entice you to attend").

Other comments related to Topics (6), e.g. 19th/20th century, middle ages, 16th/17th century, Peninsular War, West Indies; Lecturers (4); Use of online/YouTube technology (2); Better location/venue within Dublin (2); Use of email to advise members of lectures (1); Inadequate amplification (1).

Response by Council

The survey confirms the view of Council that the Lecture Programme is very popular among members and that the resources it expends on it give a very worthwhile return.

It has taken on board the suggestions and comments made by you and will consider how best to give expression to them. By far, the most frequent comments related to a desire to have some lectures held outside Dublin. It has now been decided to introduce a pilot scheme over three years in which it will hold at least one of its lectures each year in a rural venue. In October 2018, in conjunction with Wexford Historical Society, and as part of Wexford Opera Fringe Events Programme, the Society will host a lecture in the library in Wexford town. It will look at two other locations, either as part of a local festival or as a stand-alone event, for 2019 and 2022, after which it will evaluate the results.

In relation to Griffith College Dublin as a venue, this has many advantages: it is within the city; it is well served by public transport; it is accessible with good car parking; it has good lecture rooms (recently modernised) with good I.T. equipment; there is no charge for its use; and is available at night time. Other venues, such as libraries or Collins Barracks Museum may not be available at night time or up to 10pm, may not have car parking facilities, and may not always be available on the days/times we hold our lectures.

Some of you suggested starting the lecture at an earlier time in the evening or switching the day to a Saturday or other evening. The Lecture/Field Day Committee will look at that option and consider whether it would be possible to trial another day or time. However, it is cognisant of the fact that very few of you made that suggestion and a change could well discommode the majority.

In relation to recording or printing the lecture content in the *Sword*, the Society will evaluate the possibility of recording the proceedings and making them available on its website or on YouTube. That would require additional resources, the appropriate technology and the commitment and technological ability of a volunteer member of Council or the Society to implement.

As regards printing the lectures in the *Sword*, few (if any) of the lectures would have a written script, as such, which would enable its printing as an article. However, some lecturers have written articles in the *Sword* on the subject matter of their lectures.

In relation to amplification issues raised, it has been the practice of the Society in recent years to use its own amplification system when using one of the larger lecture rooms. This appears to have worked well. However, we will now explore whether the recent modernisation of the lecture room in Griffith College will allow us to use the College's own amplification system in all cases.

In relation to lecture topics, the Lecture/Field Day Committee has ensured that the lecture programme, when taken as a whole, covers a wide and comprehensive range of topics and periods. It will, however, give consideration to your comments and suggestions in this regard when formulating future programmes.

Other comments and suggestions will be considered by Council

6. CONFERENCES

A breakdown of the responses received in relation to Conferences is set out in Table 4. Detailed comments are set out after the Table.

Table 4 - Conferences									
	Have you attended			Happy with Quality			Happy with Subject Matter		
	Y	N	X	Y	N	X	Y	N	X
Dublin	23	14	1	23	-	15	23	-	15
r/GDA	7	4	0	7	-	4	7	-	4
r/Ireland	6	25	2	6	-	27	6	-	27
Overseas	1	12	0	1	-	12	1	-	12
Total (95)	37	55	3	37	-	58	37	-	55

Y = Yes; N = No; X = No response

What, if any, improvements or changes would you like to see?

Do you have any suggestions in relation to topics, locations and/or speakers?

You made the following suggestions:-

- Hold on week nights. Video record, put on web site for members only. Podcast.
- Scope for conference on Ireland and League of Nations /United Nations.
- Irish involvement in Confederacy, General Patrick Cleburne, Louisiana Tigers, etc.
- Neutrality as a topic. Refers to book "An Irishman on the Thin Green Line" as too curling etc.
- More political or background in lectures.
- An Ulster location occasionally.
- The Emergency; The UN, Small States in NATO/Warsaw Pact; Derry 1688-2017.
- Use local radio to generate publicity.
- Articles on UDR/Royal Irish, Operation Banner, Iraq, Afghanistan etc.
- Cover recent Irish events, e.g. the murder of innocents; Operation Harvest, etc.
- Better if they were slightly later.
- Consider topics from mid-late 20th century, e.g. the Irish Military & the UN.
- Confine to one day.

What might entice you to attend, or attend more regularly?

You made the following suggestions:-

- Living down the country.
- Work and family commitments are a barrier (fact of life).
- Consider moving some outside Dublin, e.g. Naval College in Cork; Ulster Museum; National Museum in Castlebar.
- An occasional move to the Provinces, especially if the subject is regional.
- Accessibility and parking.
- Don't like conferences.
- An Ulster location, occasionally.
- Timing not right in the past.
- Hold in North.
- Schedule conflicts.
- Other interests – limited time.
- Please consider using a Belfast location from time to time.
- Try more central national locations, e.g. Athlone.
- More modern topics.
- Am spending a lot of time abroad over last few years
- Personal commitments keep me away.
- Unavailable.
- Distance (within Ireland).

- 20th century topics (lack of?)
- Busy life; conflict of dates.
- Distance issue (within Ireland).
- Lives abroad.
- Suggest Spanish War.
- Generally, only interested in history post-19th century.
- They should be published in Irish Sword.
- Lives abroad.
- Travel distance (within Ireland).
- Unaware of them. (Ed note: Council issues a Circular to all members well in advance of each conference. They are also publicised on our website and on Facebook).
- Would hope to attend in future.

Summary/Comments by Council.

A total of 37 (67.3%) of you stated that you attended conferences organised by the MHSI. This figure is very high and over represents the total membership of the Society. Nevertheless, it indicated that Conferences still remain very popular with you, the members, which is borne out by attendances at them. (There was an omission on the Survey Form sent to members: MHSI Conferences was not included within the choices offered to members when asked to state the principal reasons for being a member. However, 'Other' was included, but no one specifically included conferences under that heading).

It should be borne in mind that MHSI conferences are often joint ventures with other bodies, e.g. the National Museum of Ireland, and the Society is grateful to all such bodies for their co-operation with such ventures.

Of the 37 who attended conferences, all of you stated that you were happy with both the quality and the subject matter of the lectures.

Other than favourable comments received from you about the conferences, no other comments were received under the headings of quality or subject matter.

A total of 10 (33.3%) suggested that some conferences might be held at locations other than in Dublin. (One such comment was also received under the previous heading). Some topics, e.g. Spanish Civil War, 20th century, were suggested. One person stated that s/he was unaware of them [Ed note: all members are circulated with such information]; and another suggested parking was an issue [Ed note: conferences have NOT been held in locations where parking was an issue, e.g. Collins Barracks Museum]. Other comments generally related to why you did not attend, e.g. other commitments.

Proposed Action by Council

Council is heartened by the very positive response received from you in relation to the holding of Conferences. It will give due consideration to your comments and suggestions when organising such events in the future. Again, it is noted that a number of you suggested holding some conferences outside of Dublin. Depending on the subject matter, it will give consideration to holding the next conference in Cork or Belfast.

Where practicable, papers from conferences are published in the Irish Sword. In the case of the most recent conference held in 2016 "*From Sackville Street to Salonika and the Somme*" the last two issues of the Irish Sword (numbers 123 & 124), published in 2017, were almost exclusively devoted to the proceedings of that conference.

7. LIBRARY

A breakdown of the responses received in relation to the Library (Society would be looking at ways in which books could be accessed by members in a secure location) is set out in Table 5. Detailed comments are set out after the Table.

Table 5 – Opinions on MHSI Library				
	Agree	Don't Agree	Other	No response
Dublin	19	-	2	17
r/GDA	7	-	1	3
r/Ireland	17	-	-	16
Overseas	7	1	1	4
Total (95)	50	1	4	40

You made the following comments/suggestions:-

- Put list of books on website.
- Especially if catalogue is online.
- What is the point of a library if it is not accessible?
- Would be most welcome development.
- Books should be made available for viewing and reference. It would attract more new members.
- Sooner the better.
- Index of books should be available online and reading access should be made available.
- Dedicated military library would be wonderful; consider in conjunction with Collins Bks Museum.
- (Decision) for professional judgement.
- Never knew there was such a collection.
- Would avail of facility.
- Perhaps Library should be passed to Military Archives.
- At a central location in Ireland, outside the Pale.
- Library should be available. What other purpose has it?
- Would be a good development, not necessarily limited to members.
- Need access.
- Let me know when I can visit.
- Didn't know about library. It should be held in Military Archives & accessible there.
- An active Library would be an asset.
- Would like to access them.
- Put catalogue on website and let members pay postage for postal lending.
- Like to see what it contains. Make titles available online.
- They should be available to members. It is almost pointless having them otherwise.
- Circulate list of contents to members. (Books ??) to be collected from Military Archives.
- Wasn't aware of this! Can members donate to the Library?
- Place them in Reg(imental) Museum, Armagh or Enniskillen: viewable 5 days a week.
- How about scanning them and making them available online.
- Suggest discussing with Pearse Street Library.
- Greater access to Library is to be desired. He will donate books but not if access is restricted.

- Would love to get access to these books.
- Scrap some books; move the rest to Mil Archives.
- This should be a priority.
- First step, publish list of books held and details of librarian.
- Suggest Military Archives.
- Why not online.

Summary/Comments by Council

A total of 50 (52.6%) agreed that the Society's library should be accessible to its members. One member disagreed, 5 (5.3%) made other comments, while 40 (42.1%) made no comments.

Proposed Action by Council.

The Society has very limited space in Cathal Brugha Barracks and none that would facilitate operating a library service, even on a limited basis. It is quickly running out of space to store its collection of books and magazines – most are housed in large containers in the barracks. Even if it had the facilities, it has not got the manpower resources to operate any kind of library service. Hence, its decision to consider alternative facilities in Military Archives in Cathal Brugha Barracks. This idea clearly has the overwhelming support of you, the members.

Council now proposes to approach Military Archives with a proposal to locate books which are not generally otherwise available. These would be for reference purposes - not for lending. Clearly, an index or catalogue would need to be prepared but this would require significant human and other resources.

If agreement is reached with Military Archives to use its facilities, Council will then advance the matter further. We may then seek assistance from its members to assist in the cataloguing the books.

8. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

A breakdown of the responses received in relation to the Annual General Meeting is set out in Table 6. Detailed comments are set out after the Table.

Table 6 - Annual General Meeting											
	Attend AGM				Hold AGM at Different Time				Willing to Serve on Council		
	R	O	N	X	Y	N	N/O	X	Y	N	X
Dublin	2	12	23	1	4	5	11	18	1	22	15
r/GDA	2	3	4	2	2	2	4	3	2	4	5
r/Ireland	1	5	27	0	2	3	9	19	4	20	9
Overseas	0	2	9	2	-	-	4	9	2	4	7
Total (95)	5	22	63	5	8	10	28	49	9	50	36

R= Regularly; O = Occasionally; N = Never/No; N/O = stated that they had no opinion; X = no reply received to question.

Should the AGM be held at a different time of year?

- Post-December.
- May/June.
- March/April.
- Autumn or early November.
- Spring.

- Not on day of annual dinner.
- Feb/March.
- Spring time, and review previous year's finances.

What might entice you to attend or attend on a more regular basis?

- Living down the country.
- Travel makes it not feasible.
- Distance.
- More enticing if followed by lecture.
- Have been working abroad, but will now consider.
- Nov & Dec are busy months.
- Too many other commitments
- A central location outside the Pale.
- Timing – would like to attend.
- Family commitments.
- Distance.
- Military history organisations are not a priority for me.
- Other interests – limited time.
- More interested in lectures.
- Timing not great for me.
- Distance.
- Too many competing events each year.
- A lecture at the same time.
- Time constraints.
- Time constraints.

Any Other Comments

- Put AGM Agenda, Minutes etc on website.
- Distance. Introduce Proxy voting.
- Appreciate that good administration is important but human nature and laziness are inclined to take their course.
- Too far to travel.
- Do not travel much.
- More central location, e.g. Athlone.
- Have it on another day - difficult to attend AGM and Annual Dinner.
- Health & age issues.
- Away every November.
- Relates to personal availability.
- Lives abroad.
- Work commitments.
- Longer advance notice required. (Ed note: at least 6 weeks' notice is given of the holding of AGMs).
- Can't see reason for AGM - can be done online or in conjunction with a lecture - max 5 mins.
- Saturday mornings do not suit.

Summary/Comments by Council

Only 16 (19%) expressed an opinion on whether the AGM should be held at a different time of year; 8 of you said that it should be moved but 10 said it should remain the same.

Council decided in 2017 to change its financial from October – September to the calendar year January to December. In the circumstances, it also decided to hold the AGM in the period following the end of its financial year. The next AGM will be held in February 2018. This change in date is likely to continue in the foreseeable future.

In relation to what might entice you to attend AGMs or attend them on a more regular basis, very few gave suggestions that would enable Council to further facilitate members in that regard. Most of you gave reasons why you could not attend: 9 stated you were unable because of other commitments or were otherwise too busy; 8 cited travel and distance; 4 cited time of year; and 18 made other comments. However, 3 suggested that the AGM be held in conjunction with a lecture and 1 suggested that the agenda and minutes be published online.

Proposed Action by Council

As stated above, the AGM has been moved to February. Council will also consider the suggestions of following the AGM with a lecture and of publishing the agenda and minutes on its website.

9. ANNUAL DINNER

A breakdown of the responses received in relation to the Annual Dinner is set out in Table 7. Detailed comments are set out after the Table.

	Do you attend annual dinner				Happy with format ⁵			Value for Money			Happy with quality of meal			Change time of year			Change location/venue		
	R	O	N	X	Y	N	X	Y	N	X	Y	N	X	Y	N	X	Y	N	X
Dublin	4	12	24	2	14	1	23	11	6	21	11	6	21	1	15	22	7	11	20
r/GDA	4	3	5	-	6	-	5	6	1	4	5	2	4	4	4	3	5	1	5
r/Ireland	1	7	25	-	7	1	25	11	-	22	7	-	26	3	7	23	8	4	21
Overseas	-	3	10	-	3	-	10	3	-	10	3	-	10	-	1	12	-	2	11
Total (95)	9	25	59	2	30	2	63	31	7	57	26	8⁶	61	8	27⁷	60	20	18	57

R= Regularly; O = Occasionally; N = Never/No; N/O = stated that they had no opinion; X = no reply received to question.

Do you attend?

- Not deliberate, but always seem to clash with prior engagements.
- Have been working abroad - will consider in future.
- Donegal based.
- Attended once (2).
- Live too far away.

⁵ Format includes whether dinner should be a formal occasion, have a dress code, have speeches.

⁶ Four of these might be interpreted as not entirely satisfied, rather than dissatisfied.

⁷ One stated that they were indifferent to a change.

Are you generally satisfied with the format?

- Hall too big for number attending so atmosphere cold & isolating.
- Should continue to be formal.
- (Happy) ... but speeches are a bit tedious.

Does price represent value for money?

- (Yes) ... but expensive.
- Too expensive for country members.
- Over-priced.
- Don't begrudge cost in view of low membership fee.
- A good quality restaurant would present the food better.

Are you generally satisfied with the quality of the meal?

- Prefers stylist and scant rather than crass and plentiful.
- 2016 dinner was overcooked.
- Very poor, badly cooked, no choices.
- As a non-red meat eater, would welcome fish alternative.
- Quality of main courses disappoints and is too expensive.
- I don't think steak is appropriate for main course.

Would you prefer to see dinner held at a different time of the year?

- Hold in Spring.
- March to June; December can be busy.
- September or April.
- November and December can be busy months.
- Indifferent.
- November & December is a good time.

Would you prefer to see the dinner held at a location/venue?

- A different location annually.
- Cork, Limerick or Galway.
- Limerick.
- Consider using an army mess.
- Prefer military context, e.g. military barracks, RHK, etc in Dublin and not characterless hotels.
- Not a hotel.
- Not always in Dublin.
- I like the Law Society and look forward to McKee Mess. Suggest TCD, Dublin Castle or King's Inn, and possibly the Curragh. Changing venues from time to time may add interest.
- Outside the pale.
- Belfast or Newry.
- Army mess.
- Prestigious location preferred
- Curragh.
- Law Society is fine. It's a central location with parking.
- As usual, everything is too Dublin or Belfast centred.
- Quality hotel where reputation is important.
- Cosy room in central location. Recent locations were too large, no atmosphere.
- Army mess.

- Dublin Castle. Prestigious venue helps with numbers attending.
- McKee Officers' mess
- Not happy with Law Society venue.
- Definitely NOT in a hotel function room. Office of Public works could assist in future.
- Dublin Castle.
- Wherever best value is available.
- Military type, e.g. Barracks, Dublin Castle, Royal Hospital etc.
- Variety is the spice of life.

**What might entice you to attend or attend on a more regular basis?
Are there any improvements or changes you would like to see?**

- Don't attend because of poor hearing.
 - Short speeches. Less formal dress code.
 - Keep costs down.
 - Cost and time involved travelling to Dublin.
 - Reduce cost.
 - Change in venue.
 - Do not travel at night.
 - I don't do dinners and certainly not formal ones.
 - Don't hold in Law Society.
 - Other interests – limited time.
 - Will attend when possible.
 - Lives abroad.
 - Other than Xmas time.
 - Too many functions at Xmas/New Year
 - We need services of PR person to generate publicity for this important event.
 - Price, quality of food and venue - badly need improving.
 - Age.
 - Would if nearer to my home.
 - Dislikes formal occasions.
 - An unfinished aspiration to attend.
 - Away every November.
 - Some great people attend but it can also be a bit 'stuffy' - e.g. the speeches.
 - Work commitments.
 - Less formality. A great speaker of note.
 - Nov/Dec busy and expensive. Feb/Mar AGM/Dinner better.
-
- Has always conflicted with other events. Allow members to bring guest(s)!
 - Too expensive to overnight in Dublin.
 - Have it outside Dublin, for a change - Cork or Limerick.
 - Accessibility/Parking. Table placing and other seating arrangements.
 - Don't know any other members.
 - Try a central location, e.g. Athlone.
 - Better layout of tables.
 - Likes formal, traditions, speeches, and opportunity to mix with attendees.
 - Never say never!
 - Formal is good, dress code correct, speeches welcome.
 - Longer advance notice. Table for singles.

Summary/Comments by Council.

A total of 34 of you stated that you attend the dinner regularly or occasionally. Of that number, 47% come from Dublin; 20.5% from r/GDA; 23.5% from r/Ireland; and 8.8% from Overseas.

31.6% of you stated that you were satisfied with the format; 2.1% were not satisfied; and 66.3% did not respond to the question.

32.6% stated that the dinner offered value for money, while 7.4% disagreed and 60% did not respond.

27.4% of you stated that you were happy with the quality of the meal; 8.4% were not satisfied or not entirely satisfied; while 64.2% did not respond.

8.4% of you suggested that the dinner be changed to a different time of year; 28.4% wanted it to remain as is; and 63.1% did not respond.

21.1% of you suggested a change in location or venue; 18.9 wanted it to remain the same; and 60% did not respond. 8 of you suggested that the dinner take place in an army mess, Dublin Castle, Royal Hospital Kilmainham or other 'prestigious' venue. 7 suggested locations outside Dublin – Cork, Limerick, Galway, Belfast, Newry and the Curragh were suggested. 2 suggested hotels while 2 others opposed hotels. 2 suggested not changing.

Proposed Action by Council.

In 2017, Council decide to change the venue to the Officers' Mess, McKee Barracks. The event was overbooked and, regrettable, some of you could not be accommodated. It appears the change was most welcome and that the meal was very satisfactory. Council is not aware of any adverse comments.

Council has decided to hold the dinner in McKee Barracks in the foreseeable future.

10. SUMMER TOUR (Ireland)

A breakdown of the responses received in relation to the Summer Tour is set out in Table 8. Detailed comments are set out after the Table.

Table 8 - Summer Tour (in Ireland)																	
	Do you attend				Prefer 2/3 days/other ⁸			Start Sun; End Mon/Tue				Happy with quality			Value for money		
	R	O	N	X	2	3	X	Y	C	N	X	Y	N	X	Y	N	X
Dublin	8	14	13	3	14	6	17	4	21	2	11	20	-	18	20	-	18
r/GDA	3	5	2	1	4	4	2	4	5	-	2	8	-	3	7	1	3
r/Ireland	2	7	23	1	8	5	20	7	7	3	16	9	-	24	11	-	22
Overseas	1	2	10	0	1	1	11	0	2	-	11	3	-	10	1	-	12
Total (95)	14	28	48	5	27	16	50	15	35	5	40	40	-	55	39	1	55

R= Regularly; O = Occasionally; N = Never/No; X = no reply received to question; 2 = 2-day; 3 = 3-day; C = would consider.

⁸ One person suggested either a 2 or 3-day tour, another suggested a 1-day summer tour.

Are you in favour of commencing tour on a Sunday and finishing on a Monday/Tuesday?

- Saturday to Monday is best.

Are you generally satisfied with the overall quality of the tours?

- No comments received.

Do summer tours give value for money?

- Registration fee too high.
- Hotels in Ireland can be expensive.

Do you have any suggestions re topics, locations and/or speakers?

- Happy with existing.
- Waterford, the Boyne, Clontarf.
- The defences of Limerick and the Shannon.
- An Ulster themed tour.
- More international speakers.
- The demise of Irish Large Houses and military after Act of Union.
- Consider extending the tours to encompass non Irish topics or events.
- Appears to be an (over) emphasis on 17th and 18th century.
- The more interesting the better!

What might entice you to attend or attend on a more regular basis?

- Would if I knew some of the members (x2).
- Subject matter & geographical diversity.
- Can't afford the cost.
- Have been working abroad - will consider now.
- My job ensures I am never available to attend. Otherwise, would love to.
- Time/Distance/Travel! (x2)
- Would prefer limited amount of walking.
- Topics.
- There are lots of alternatives and my interests are broader than military history. I would be more attracted if accesses to places that are not normally open to the public, e.g. Northern Ireland in WW2.
- Age.
- Hope to in future.
- Would like to attend more tours but can't because of work.
- Health and age issues.
- Lack of contact with the Society is the main problem - my fault.
- Depends on topic and it being not more than 2-days.
- Work commitments - maybe when retired.
- More open approach to the "occasional" attendee!
- Topic / Locations critical.

Have you any other Comments?

- These tours are too expensive for ordinary members.
- MHSI speakers very good, but consider using local historians, where available, as well.
- Hotels are poor quality.
- Don't seem to have the time.

- We need a greater variety of speakers.
- Can't attend because of work
- Could Society do some improvement/upgrade to some sites, e.g. cut back growth on Shannon Forts?

Summary/Comments by Council

44% of you stated that you attend the Summer tour in Ireland regularly or occasionally. Of this number 52.3% are from Dublin; 19% from r/GDA; 21.4% from r/Ireland and 1% from overseas.

27 stated that you preferred a 2 day tour while 16 preferred a three day tour. That's a 2:1 majority in favour of a 2 day tour. One (1) of you was happy with either. 15 of you stated that you favoured commencing the tour on a Sunday; 35 were open to that suggestion; and 5 were against. 40 did not respond

40 stated that you were satisfied with the overall quality of the tours; no one stated that they were dissatisfied, and 55 did not respond. 39 of you stated that the tour gave value for money; 1 stated that they did not and there were 55 who did not respond.

In relation to topics, locations etc. some of you suggested places where we have visited in recent years, e.g. Limerick, Shannon, Waterford, the Boyne, Ulster. New suggestions made were *The Demise of Irish Large House and the Military after the Act of Union* and covering events that encompass non-Irish topics.

Proposed Action by Council.

In 2018 Council have decided to hold a 2-day Summer tour, commencing on a Sunday. In future years it will generally confine the tours to 2 days and commence them on a Sunday. However, having regard to the large minority of you who favoured 3-day tours, Council proposes that some tours in the future will be 3 days. The criteria will be the distance and the number of sites to be visited.

Council will also look at other suggestions made. It may also consider holding some Summer tours in the United Kingdom.

11. FIELD-DAY

A breakdown of the responses received in relation to the Field-day is set out in Table 9. Detailed comments are set out after the Table.

Table 9 - Field-Day										
	Do you attend				Happy with quality			Value for money		
	R	O	N	X	Y	N	X	Y	N	X
Dublin	9	18	9	2	26	-	12	24	1 ⁹	13
r/GDA	3	6	1	1	6	-	5	6	1	4
r/Ireland	1	8	24	0	9	-	24	12	-	21
Overseas	1	0	11	1	1	-	12	1	-	12
Total (95)	14	32	45	4	42	-	53	43	2	50

⁹ One replied that there was value for money sometimes.

Do you have any suggestions re topics, locations and/or speakers?

- Dublin Castle & Bank of Ireland (Grattan's Parliament).
- Don't see point in holding speeches in rain, wind & cold.
- New speakers required in order to widen the presentations.
- Siege of Derry; 1798 Rebellion; Battle of Ballynahinch.
- Appears to be (over) emphasis on 17th & 18th century.
- Topic and locations critical.

What might entice you to attend or attend on a more regular basis?

- Distance
- Clash of dates with other commitments - not a cost issue.
- Distance.
- Have been working abroad – will consider now.
- Time!
- Would prefer limited amount of walking.
- Diary issue.
- If I could use own car and avoid formal booking procedure.
- Don't know any other members.
- Location.
- As comments under Summer Tour. Cost is also a factor, and I don't know others who travel. (I have no military background).
- Age.
- Hope to in future.
- Distance.
- Age.
- You might consider a trip to Munster at some time stage. We are quite welcoming & civilised. (Ed note: Most, if not all of Munster is a bit far from Dublin for a field-day. However, many of our Summer Tours have taken place in Munster – Siege of Limerick (2016); West Cork (2015); The Desmond Earldom (2013).
- Relates to personal availability
- A question of topic.
- Work commitments; maybe when I retire.
- More open approach to "occasional" attendee.
- My interests (wars of 20th century) are too restricted.
- Too far away for a day trip.
- MHSI speakers very good but consider using local historians, where available, as well.
- Don't change.
- Overbooking is a problem. I suggest that the present arrangement be supplemented with a second set of talks where, due to under capacity in a building or some other reason, e.g. bus hire, numbers to an event are limited. The second set of talks could be on an ad-hoc basis limited to those who turn up on the day. (Ed note: overbooking on field-days is not a problem).
- Don't appear to have time.
- Broaden our interests to include non-Irish topics. Look at the Maynooth University course.
- I attended the 1916 FD which was great.

Summary/Comments by Council

58.7% of Dublin based members attend field-days regularly or occasionally; 19.6% from r/GDA; 19.6% from r/Ireland; and 20.2% from overseas.

44.2% said that you were happy with the quality; none said they were dissatisfied and 55.8% did not respond. 45.3% stated that field-days gave value for money; 2.1% stated that they did not; and 52.6% offered no view.

Proposed Action by Council.

As the majority of members are based in or near Dublin, and as field-days must take place at locations which are within one day’s driving distance, the option of holding field-days at locations remote from Dublin is limited. Council is not convinced that sufficient members would attend if a field-day started and finished in centres outside Dublin. There would also be logistical issues for those involved in organising the events.

While Dublin may be inconvenient to get to for many members to commence a Field-Day, it is always possible for members to join the tour at the event in question (as many of you do).

Council may consider whether it feasible to commence some field-days earlier in the morning. This would allow the tour to travel further and thus increase the catchment area of potential participants.

Council notes the suggestions made by you. These included Dublin Castle, Grattan’s Parliament (Bank of Ireland), Siege of Derry (probably too far for a field-day but could be considered as part of a Summer Tour), 1798 Rebellion (done in 1998, but could be incorporated into a summer tour of the South-East); and the Battle of Ballinahinch.

12. SWITCH SUMMER (WEEKEND) TOUR/AUTUMN FIELD-DAY

Weekend tours are normally held at the start of the summer and field-days held in early autumn. We asked you would you prefer if these activities were reversed, i.e. hold the weekend tours in the autumn and the field-days in the summer.

A breakdown of the responses received in relation to the Field-Day is set out in Table 10. Detailed comments are set out after the Table.

Table 10 - Should weekend tour in summer and field-day in the autumn			
	Stay the same	Reverse	No response
Dublin	18 ¹⁰	2	18
r/GDA	7	1	3
r/Ireland	9	3	21
Overseas	4	0	9
Total (95)	38	6	51

Proposed Action by Council.

In view of your response, we would propose to retain the present arrangement in most cases. There may be some circumstances where we might reverse them, where circumstances so dictate.

13. OVERSEAS TOUR

A breakdown of the responses received in relation to the Overseas Tour is set out in Tables 11A and 11B. Detailed comments are set out after the Tables.

¹⁰ One person replied “either or”.

Table 11A- Overseas Tour Part 1													
	Do you attend				Happy with quality			Happy with subject matter			Happy with battles/locations		
	R	O	N	X	Y	N	X	Y	N	X	Y	N	X
Dublin	7	7	21	3	15	-	23	15	-	23	13	-	25
r/GDA	2	7	4	0	7	-	4	7	-	4	7	-	4
r/Ireland	1	5	27	0	7	-	26	6	--	27	6	-	27
Overseas	1	0	11	1	1	-	12	1	-	12	1	-	12
Total (95)	11	17	63	4	30	-	65	29	-	66	27	-	68

Table 11B – Overseas Tour Part 2																
	Happy with Hotels used			Happy with hotel & meals options			Prefer 7/12/14 day or other duration				Agree with R&R Option			Value for Money		
	Y	N	X	Y	N	X	7d	12d	14d	X	Y	N	X	Y	N	X
Dublin	14	-	25	15	1	22	13	4	4	17	18	2	18	12	-	26
r/GDA	6	-	5	8	-	3	3	2	2	3 ¹¹	8	-	3	6	2	3
r/Ireland	6	-	27	7	-	26	26	1	1	25	11	1	21	9	-	24
Overseas	1	-	12	1	-	12	-	1	1	12	2	-	11	-	-	13
Total (95)	26	-	69	31	1	63	22	8	8	57	39	3	53	27	2	66

Do you attend?

- (No) ... but it was a major incentive for joining.
- Have only been to Italy and Western Front, so far.

Are you generally satisfied with the subject matter of the tours?

- (Yes) ... But bring in new speakers to broaden the subject and vary the presentations

Are you generally satisfied with the countries/locations/battles, campaigns or themes selected?

- (Yes) ... but consider non-Irish themes.

Are you satisfied with Council's policy re city centre locations; B&B and lunch arrangements?

- Packed lunches not great. Looking after own arrangements, with guidance, is fine.

What duration (days) would you prefer? 7/12/14/Other.

- Depends on where we are going!
- 12 to 14 days.

Are you in favour of the MHSI offering an optional 2/3 R&R extension to tours?

- (Yes) ... as long as it's an option.
- (No) ...I am much travelled.

¹¹ One stated that the duration should be location dependent.

Where would you prefer tours to visit or what battles/campaigns would you like to see covered?

- WW1 & WW2.
- American Civil War – Irish Battles.
- WW1 & WW2 locations.
- Continue with mix of 20th and pre-20th century warfare.
- Irish Brigade in Italian Campaign of WW2. (Ed note: This was done in 2015).
- Waterloo.
- Broader than battlefields/campaigns and something I cannot do on my own, e.g. Irish in Cadiz, Tenerife. WW1 tour seemed very expensive compared with commercial package from same operator.
- Irish participation in Papal War of 1860 - Spoleto, Ancona, Perugia. (Ed note: This was done in 2015).
- Your selections are a tonic.
- WW2
- Scotland – Culloden
- Scotland 2019.
- Spain; Spanish Civil War.
- Scandinavia.
- The Marcher Normans & Castles in Wales.

Do summer tours give value for money?

- Based on brochure received, it affords value for money.
- Slightly on high side.
- (Yes) ...but seems to be edging up considerably.
- Bespoke tours are more expensive.

What would entice you to attend or attend on a more regular basis?

- For working members, a week's annual leave is a lot. Give option to join Group two or three days into the tour. (Ed note: This is generally possible).
- Tours have not fitted in with my holiday plans.
- I don't have a travelling companion.
- Afternoon flights midweek.
- Subject matter.
- Family commitments but intend to travel in years to come.
- Some recent tours were repeats of previous tours I have done.
- I am disorganised.
- Would like to attend, but diary issue.
- Awaiting retirement.
- More access to 'restricted' places. Broader agenda.
- Age.
- If it more met my history tastes
- Age.
- Any tours in Northern Ireland? (Ed note: Many domestic Summer Tours are held in Ulster, including Northern Ireland).
- Would love to join one in due course.
- Not interested in trips greater than 1 or 2 days.

- If I lived in Ireland, or if I could joint tour from Europe. (Ed note: joining a foreign tour in the country in which it is being held is always possible, and is availed of regularly).
- Work commitments - maybe when retired.
- Price; dates available; and subject matter.
- Time and cost.
- Too long and expensive - smacks of package tours. Wife not interested in military history and timescale is too long to attempt negotiating with her!
- Less walking. A better mixture of military and cultural - after all, they are all intertwined.
- Will make effort next year.
- Not all tours should have a military focus.
- Keep doing what you're doing.

Summary/Comments by Council

29.5% of you stated that you attend Overseas Tours on regularly or occasionally; 66.2% said that you never attended; 4.2% did not respond to the question.

31.6% stated that you were happy with the quality; no one stated that they were unhappy; 66.3% did not respond.

30.5% stated that you were happy with the subject matters; 1 stated that they were unhappy; 69.5% did not respond.

28.4% of you stated that you were happy with the battles/locations; no one stated that they were unhappy; 71.6% did not respond.

27.4% stated that you were happy with the hotels; no one stated that they were unhappy; 72.6% did not respond.

32.6% stated that you were happy with the hotel B&B / lunch options; one stated that they were unhappy; 66.3% did not respond.

23.2% preferred if tours were confined to 7 days; 8.4% preferred 12 days; 8.4% preferred 14days; 60% did not respond.

41.1% stated that you were happy with the Council offering an additional 2 or 3 days R&R extension to tours; 3.2% stated that they would be with that option being given; 60% did not respond.

Locations suggested by you were: USA (Civil War) [Western Theatre of Civil War done by Society in 2011]; Spain – Civil War, Cadiz, Tenerife; WW1 [done in 2017]; WW2; Italy (Papal War) [done in 2015]; Scandinavia; The Marcher Normans & Castles in Wales; Scotland (Culloden); Waterloo; mix of 20th & pre-20th century battles; non-Irish themed battles.

You suggested that you be allowed join a foreign tour in the country in which it is being held. This is always possible, and is availed of regularly. Another suggested that s/he be allowed join a tour into its second or third day. This is generally possible – it’s a matter of contacting the tour operated appointed by Council to see if that option is available for the particular tour. Members have availed of this facility].

Proposed Action by Council.

It is apparent from the survey that members are very satisfied with the Overseas Tours. Council sought your views under a wide range of headings and gave you the opportunity to express whatever other views you may hold. As this activity is the most expensive of all the events organised by council, it was deemed important to give you the opportunity to have a full say in the matter. Under all headings, you expressed views which have informed Council that we should continue with the present structure. On the question of whether the tours represented value for money, 28.4% of respondents stated that they did while only 2.1% said that they didn't, while 69.5% did not respond to the question. In this regard, Council normally compares the cost estimates of its proposals with the cost of other similar (escorted) tour packages offered by tour companies, and our tours compare very favourably. This is particularly so when one considers that bespoke tours will, invariably, cost a lot more than "off-the shelf" package tours. The only significant change Council proposes, based on your responses, will relate to the durations of the tours.

Of those who expressed a preference on the duration of overseas tours, 58% stated that you preferred a duration of 7 days, as opposed to 21% each who prefer either 12-day or 14-day tours. In view of the preferences stated, Council will likely restrict the majority of overseas tours in the future to one week. However, having regard to the significant number who still prefer tours up to two weeks long, and having regard to the destination and /or campaigns being studied where a tour could not be covered satisfactorily within one week, longer periods will be necessary or appropriate in some cases.

As the vast majority respondents (93%) stated that they wished the two/three day optional R&R extension to remain, Council will continue with that practice for the foreseeable future.

14. COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

A breakdown of the responses received in relation to the Communications and Social Media is set out in Table 12. Detailed comments are set out after the Tables.

Table 12 – Communications and Social Media														
	Satisfied with Communications with you			Do you use social media			Specify type of social media used					Would welcome further use of social media		
	Y	N	X	Y	N	X	E	W	F	T	X	Y	N/?	X
Dublin	31	2	5	26	6	6	32	18	9	2	6	17	8	13
r/GDA	9	1	1	8	1	2	9	4	1	-	2	5	2	4
r/Ireland	27	4	2	25	3	5	28	19	12	6	5	13	10	10
Overseas	10	1	2	10	2	1	11	8	3	-	2	6	3	4
Total (95)	77	8	10	69	12	14	80	49	25	8	15	41	23	31

Y = Yes; N = No; X = No response; E = Emails; W = Websites; F = Facebook; T = Twitter; X = No response.

Are you generally satisfied with the manner in which the Society communicates with you?

- Would love greater use of internet.
- Was on email list but haven't received anything recently. (Ed Note: Checked and he is on list and is being sent emails).
- I only receive correspondence by post.
- More effective by email as I move around.

- The internet is the cheapest, easiest and best way to communicate. I have not been <impressed?> by Eventbrite - generally I find such sites useless.

Do you use social media?

- In a limited way.

If so, please specify which of the following you use?

- *Viber* and *WhatsApp*.
- Messenger.
- *Instagram*.
- Texting (x2).
- *WhatsApp*

Would you welcome further use of use by the MHSI of social media?

- Possibly beneficial, though I personally ignore 'online world' as far as possible.
- Consider AV recording of lectures and posting them on YouTube.
- (Member appears to prefer to pay electronically rather than by cheque/post!).
- Only by email.
- Did not know that MHSI had website or Facebook.
- Suggest that you ask members to say if they are happy to receive communications by email only, as it would represent a cost saving to the Society.
- Would prefer emails.
- (Yes) .. but not to the exclusion of paper correspondence.
- (No) ... unless combined with annual events list and hard copy notifications.
- MHSI seems to use Facebook > Website > Email. My preference is the reverse.
- Social media only way to attract new members.
- (Yes) ... especially YouTube or Podcast.
- A healthy balance between traditional and social media.
- Would be happy to receive all communications, except AGM, by email.
- Website development for PDF copies and board for discussion.
- Online forum where members could raise questions and queries etc.
- More use of emails re MHSI activities.
- Having to plough through emails is a waste of time.
- Pay online, use Twitter.
- It might bring better presence.
- Contact by email would be preferable regarding admin issues etc.
- Would prefer correspondence by email.

Other General Comment Received.

1. Looking to future:-

- * Where does MHSI want to be positioned in 5 years' time?
- * What type of age profile of Membership does it want?
- * Consider those who cannot travel to Dublin!
- * Audio files for Sword - Listen to?
- * IT technology changes - what does MHSI want of its web site?
- * MHSI Facebook - Page of Tours and Lectures.
- * Visit Tank Museum in UK when Open day, BA + RAF etc

2. Society tie should be made available as should the silver lapel badge.

Summary/ Comments by Council

81% of you stated that you were satisfied with how the Society communicated with you; 8.4% stated you were not; 10.5% expressed no opinion.

72.7% said that you use social media; 12.6% said that you didn't; 14.7% did not respond to the question.

When asked what type of social media you use, 80 said email; 49 said websites; 25 use Facebook; 8 use Twitter and 5 mentioned *WhatsApp, Viber; Messenger, Instagram, & texting*. 15 of you did not respond.

When asked if you would welcome the future use of social media¹², 43% said yes; 24% said no; 33% did not respond.

Proposed Action by Council.

Having regard to the overwhelming number who stated that they were satisfied with how the Society communicated with you, Council has no immediate plans to change its current practice at present.

A number of you requested that communications should be by email. If a large voluntary organisation (>500 members) like the MHSI were to use emails as a primary means of communicating with its members, its system would need to be robust and provide assurances and safeguards to its members against hacking, spam and viruses. The Society would need systems and procedures that were safe, met all regulatory requirements and best practice and that could verify delivery of its emails in each and every case. It would probably require Council to set up its own computer system/server rather than rely on individual members to provide such facilities. It might also require a competent IT person to manage and oversee such a system. Any such system would have to operate in parallel with our existing paper based/ordinary postal system.

Council is, however, mindful of the benefits of modern technology and how it may be used to reduce costs and provide alternative options for those who prefer to use information technology exclusively or as their primary means of communications. In this regards, most communications which issue from the Society by ordinary post, e.g. the lecture programme card, Tour Circulars, etc are also made available on its website, on Facebook and by email. Talks, lectures and other events which are not organised by the Society but of which we are notified to it are often posted on Facebook and emailed to members.

Council will have regard to all the above.

¹² This question may have been ambiguous as it could be interpreted as meaning would a member welcome further use of social media in its current form and extent, or whether a member would welcome further use as an extension of its current use, e.g. used instead of ordinary post to notify members of core events.

Conclusion

This is probably the first major survey ever undertaken by the Society (a more limited survey was undertaken in recent years in relation to the annual dinner). Council was very satisfied at the relatively large number of members who returned the Survey forms and of the time and effort spent by them in completing the forms. We believe that an overall 17% response rate is very good and gives a good representation of the views of all its members. The time and effort involved has ensured that Council is now better informed of the requirements of its membership and is better able to meet their needs into the future.

Overall, Council is satisfied that its current policies, programmes and activities are meeting the overwhelming needs and desires of its members and the quality of its output is ranked high among you. It also gives its members good value for money in the range of events it organises. What was not covered in the Survey was the annual subscription fee which, at €32, represents very good value for money. The fee has not been increased over the last 25 years. New membership was not addressed either; this is an ongoing issue for the Society and one in which all its members can contribute by trying to recruit new members.

In this Summary Report (and in the Final (full) Report, Council has set out a series of proposed actions. Council proposes to report on these actions at its AGMs over the next few years.

Adopted by Council on 15th February 2018.