



CHAIRMAN'S SPEECH – 25TH ANNIVERSARY LUNCHEON.

DISTINGUISHED DIRECTORS, LEGAD, AUDITOR, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

IT IS BOTH AN HONOUR AND A PRIVILEGE TO STAND BEFORE YOU THIS AFTERNOON AT DEFENCE FORCES OFFICERS' MESS AS WE CELEBRATE AN EXTRAORDINARY MILESTONE—THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MILITARY HERITAGE TRUST OF IRELAND.

TO-DAY, WE DO NOT SIMPLY MARK THE PASSAGE OF YEARS; WE HONOUR A QUARTER-CENTURY'S DEDICATION TO PRESERVING AND PROMOTING THE RICH TAPESTRY OF IRELAND'S MILITARY HISTORY.

LET US CAST OUR MINDS BACK TO THE 27TH OF AUGUST, 1999, WHEN A HANDFUL OF INDIVIDUALS WITH VISION, COMMITMENT, AND AN ABIDING RESPECT FOR OUR SHARED MILITARY HERITAGE GATHERED TO ESTABLISH THIS TRUST.

THEIR LEGACY IS THE FOUNDATION UPON WHICH WE HAVE BUILT ALL THAT HAS FOLLOWED. ALLOW ME TO RECALL WITH GRATITUDE AND RESPECT THE NAMES OF OUR FOUNDING DIRECTORS: SIR JOHN GORMAN, MR KEVIN MCGORAN, MAJOR-GENERAL PATRICK NOWLAN (RETIRED), OUR INAUGURAL CHAIRMAN, MAJOR-GENERAL DAVID O'MORCHOE (RETIRED), MR DAVID WALLACE, LT COL HARVEY BICKER (RETIRED), MR JOHN CULLINANE FROM THE UNITED STATES, AND PROFESSOR EUNAN O'HALPIN. EACH BROUGHT UNIQUE STRENGTHS AND PERSPECTIVES, REFLECTING A BREADTH OF BACKGROUNDS AND TRADITIONS.

SINCE THOSE EARLY DAYS, OUR DIRECTORS HAVE BEEN DRAWN FROM THE MANY TRADITIONS OF IRELAND, AND A WIDE RANGE OF PROFESSIONAL FIELDS—BUSINESS, PUBLIC SERVICE, MILITARY SERVICE, AND ACADEMIA.



OUR MEMBERSHIP MIRRORS THESE DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS, UNITED BY A PASSIONATE COMMITMENT TO ADVANCING IRELAND’S UNIQUE MILITARY HERITAGE.

WE ARE FURTHER INDEBTED TO MAJOR-GENERAL COLM MANGAN, THE THEN DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF (SUPPORT), WHO SERVED AS THE DEFENCE FORCES EX-OFFICIO DIRECTOR, AND TO THE DIRECTORS ELECTED IN SUBSEQUENT YEARS: COLONEL WILLIAM GIBSON (RETIRED), MR FRANK MURRAY, FORMER SECRETARY-GENERAL TO THE GOVERNMENT, AND DR PAT WALLACE, FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF IRELAND. THEIR COMBINED EXPERTISE AND EXPERIENCE HELPED STEER THE TRUST THROUGH PERIODS OF CHANGE AND GROWTH, ALWAYS WITH AN UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO OUR MISSION.

IT IS ALSO APPROPRIATE TO RECALL WITH SOLEMNITY AND HONOUR THOSE DIRECTORS WHO ARE NO LONGER WITH US:- SENATOR MAURICE HAYES, MAJOR-GENERAL P.F. NOWLAN, DR FRANK MURRAY, MAJOR-GENERAL DAVID O’MORDHOE.

THROUGHOUT THESE 25 YEARS, THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE AND THE DEFENCE FORCES HAVE PROVIDED STEADFAST SUPPORT, OFFERING OFFICE ACCOMMODATION AND SERVING AS OUR REGISTERED ADDRESS. THEIR PARTNERSHIP HAS GIVEN US NOT ONLY A HOME BUT ALSO A FOUNDATION OF TRUST AND SECURITY UPON WHICH OUR VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION CONTINUES TO FLOURISH. THE TRUST WAS INCORPORATED ON 30 JUNE 2000.

AS AN ALL-IRELAND TRUST, WE CONTINUE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT MILITARY HERITAGE TRANSCENDS POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS BOUNDARIES. OUR APPROACH REMAINS NON-DENOMINATIONAL AND NON-POLITICAL, CHAMPIONING AN INCLUSIVE VISION OF MILITARY HERITAGE—ONE THAT RECOGNISES A SHARED LEGACY ACROSS THE ISLAND AND BEYOND.



**WE SEEK TO FOSTER UNDERSTANDING AND REMEMBRANCE, TO HONOUR AND
COMMEMORATE IRISH MEN AND WOMEN FROM EVERY TRADITION AND EVERY PART OF
IRELAND WHO HAVE SERVED WORLDWIDE IN ARMED FORCES, IRRESPECTIVE OF
THEATRE OF OPERATIONS, NATIONAL COLOUR, OR REGIMENTAL COLOUR.**

**TOGETHER, WE HAVE PRESERVED HISTORIC SITES AND ARTEFACTS, SUPPORTED
RESEARCH THROUGH OUR BURSARY SCHEME, AND FOSTERED A NATIONAL
CONVERSATION ABOUT THE STORY OF THE IRISH SOLDIER.**

**BUT TODAY, WE CELEBRATE NOT ONLY TANGIBLE ACHIEVEMENTS, BUT ALSO THE SPIRIT
OF COOPERATION AND THE SHARED PURPOSE THAT HAS DEFINED OUR WORK FROM THE
VERY BEGINNING.**

**AS WE LOOK TO THE FUTURE, LET US REAFFIRM OUR PLEDGE TO SAFEGUARD THE
STORIES, ARTEFACTS, AND TRADITIONS THAT SHAPE OUR SHARED IDENTITY. LET US
CONTINUE TO INSPIRE NEW GENERATIONS TO VALUE IRELAND'S MILITARY PAST, NOT AS A
RELIC, BUT AS A LIVING LEGACY.**

**ON THIS SPECIAL OCCASION, I THANK EACH OF YOU FOR YOUR COMMITMENT, YOUR
VISION, AND YOUR FRIENDSHIP.**

MAY THE NEXT 25 YEARS BE AS BRIGHT AND FRUITFUL AS THE LAST.

PAUL FRY (BRIG GEN (RETD))

CHAIRMAN,

MILITARY HERITAGE TRUST OF IRELAND CLG.