An enthusiastic crowd including many from local Historical Societies enjoyed a very informative talk given by Dr. William Murphy, DCU on the First Dáil in the Council Chamber, Swords on Monday January 21st. Fingal County Council, in conjunction with Rolestown/Oldtown Historical Association were commemorating the 100th anniversary of the first meeting of Dáil Éireann in the Round Room in the Mansion House on 21st January 1919. The talk attracted a cross section of elected members, past and present, including Dep. Mayor Cllr Gráinne Maguire, Cllr Darragh Butler, Cllr Cathal Boland and former Cllrs David O’Connor and May McKeon.

Catherine Keane from Fingal Local Studies and Archive introduced the main speaker Dr. William Murphy, who is based in the School of History and Geography, DCU and whose primary field of research is modern Irish history, with particular expertise in the history
of the Irish revolutionary period. His talk outlined political and social life after the 1916 Rising setting the scene for the establishment of the First Dáil. He spoke about the Elected Members of the Dáil and the different roles that they played within it and also discussed the effectiveness of the Dáil over its lifetime.

A lively question and answer session followed the talk before Mrs Una O'Brien, Chairperson of the Rolestown/Oldtown Historical Association, addressed the closing remarks, particularly in relation to the local involvement in the events of the era and brought the evening to a close by thanking the speaker and those in attendance.

Twenty-seven MPs attended the first meeting of the Dáil and the proceedings were held in the Irish language, although translations of the documents were also read out in English and French. The members declared Irish independence, ratified the 1916 Proclamation of the Irish Republic, and adopted a provisional constitution. The First Dáil (Jan 1919 - May 1921) met 21 times continuing to conduct its main business in the turbulent times of the era.

Dr William Murphy is co-editor of Studia Hibernica as well as being co-founder of Sports History Ireland. He has also published a number of books including "Michael Collins: the man and the revolution", “Political Imprisonment and the Irish 1912 – 1921”, as well as contributing to the Atlas of the Irish Revolution. His current research involves looking at the relationship between imprisonment, health, ill-health and medicine in England and Ireland which will contribute to a major project being undertaken entitled “Prisoners, Medical Care and Entitlement to Health in England and Ireland 1850-2000”.

ENDS

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