**The Irish Georgian Society Birr/Midlands Chapter**

**Year ending 31 August 2020**

The past year has been unkind to us all. Lives have been disrupted, plans abandoned. We are in suspended animation.

The Birr/Midlands Chapter of the IGS had continued with its monthly meetings, from September 2019, abruptly shuddering to a halt from March 2020.

Given that 75% of the committee is in the vulnerable age group there have been no events since then.

Leading up to that, in **September 2019**, a planned guided visit to nearby **Clonfert**, by East Galway historian Christy Cuniffe, had been planned for Saturday 14th. Unfortunately this had to be cancelled due to the funeral of our fellow committee member, Theo Dillon. Due to bad weather in Autumn/Winter, the event had been postponed and after the events of early 2020 postponed indefinitely.

On **11 November**, theBirr/Midlands Chapter 26th annual meeting took place during which 2 new committee members were elected – Alison, Lady Rosse and Adrienne Symes

**On 7 December,** theBirr/Midlands Chapter held its Christmas Party at Birr Castle, as usual graciously hosted by Lord and Lady Rosse. This was one of the most successful Christmas parties ever and attracted 70 guests, not only from the Birr/Midlands area but also from other locations including London, Dublin and Kilkenny. We were entertained by local tenor, John Molloy, with a medley of suitable festive songs and entertaining ditties.

At our most recent committee meeting held on **9 March 2020**, we began discussing our annual programme of excursions. By 27 March, the country was locked down and all plans came to a standstill

In July, a review of the **2009** **Public Realm Plan** for the town was requested by Offaly County Council the results of which will help shape the projects for Failte Ireland’s new ‘Destination Town’ initiative under which Birr has been allocated funding. The Chapter, being one of the stakeholders consulted in 2009, was more than happy to assess progress since then, point out areas which should have received more attention over the decade and suggest actions that need to be taken in future in order to preserve the heritage status of the town.

Future meetings and events remain uncertain.

The Committee had decided some time ago that the **annual Christmas Party** would take place on the first Friday of December every year. At the time of writing no plans are underway for this event in 2020.

Finally, the news of the death of Desmond Guinness, in August, was met with great sadness. The Committee sent condolences to the Hon. Mrs Guinness and also to Sir David Davies, President of IGS.

**From memory lane** : the photo below shows members visiting a fascinating local tourist destination - ***Charleville Castle, Tullamore*** - on 29 June 2019

