

Recognising female impact on Irish history

■ Galway conference highlights role of women in the country's story

THE part played by Irish women through the nation's history was the theme of a Galway conference that was fittingly addressed by Sabina Higgins, wife of the President, in Moylough.

She spoke at length on women's contribution to Irish society down through the years, at the well-attended conference on 'Women: their contribution to Irish History & Society' in Moylough Community Centre.

The conference touched on many themes - but all of them revolved around the role of females in the story of Ireland.

Emigration has been part and parcel of life in the country down through the ages - and Eileen Davis who works as the Heritage Tourism Development Officer at Carna Emigrants Centre gave a very informative talk on "Women of the Atlantic-Connemara to Portland, Maine from the 1880s to the 1960".

This was followed by a talk

from Mary Ryan on the role and importance of the Irish Countrywomen's Association and the Irish Housewives' Association in the lives of Irish women.

Pat Johnston spoke on the life of Ada English who spent almost 40 years working at St Brigid's Hospital, Ballinasloe.

While there, she helped to introduce occupational therapy, which included sports, farming and horticulture, and weekly trips to the local cinema. She campaigned for better conditions for mentally ill patients at Ballinasloe, and throughout her life, she campaigned at a national level for reform of Ireland's large psychiatric institutions.

Moylough Heritage Group Chairperson TJ Carty expressed their delight with 'the quality and calibre of the lectures'.

"All the new research that is being carried out by local heritage groups is extremely impor-

tant in helping us gain a greater understanding of all those who have gone before us," he added.

The story of the Mountbellew Workhouse Orphan Girls sent to Western Australia in 1852 was also told. The local group have put considerable time and energy into researching this group of 33 young girls transported to Australia on the Palestine ship.

Lorna Elms, National Museum of Ireland, Country Life Castlebar spoke about the "Our Irish Women Project" and its exhibition which is now on show in the museum in Castlebar.

Several Galway groups - including Moylough Heritage Group, Skehana Heritage Group, Killereen Heritage, Abbey Heritage, Claregalway Heritage, Abbey Heritage, Moycullen and Oughterard Heritage Groups - are involved in this community heritage project and exhibition, which will be travelling to various parts of the county in 2019.



Sabina Higgins addressing the "Women, Their Contribution to Irish History and Society" conference in Moylough, Co. Galway. PHOTOS: HANY MARZOUK



John Fanning, Edel Mannion, Anne Mannion and Mary Mannion.



Aileen Rynne from Athenry and Angela Kely from Oranmore.



Pictured at the "Women, Their Contribution to Irish History and Society" conference organized by Galway county council heritage in Moylough this week were (from left) Mary Ryan, Noreen Geraghty, Roisín McHugh, Mary Mullens, Lorna Elms, National Museum of Ireland, Country Life Castlebar, Marie Mannion, Heritage Officer, Galway County Council, TJ Carty, Mary Lyons, Pat Johnston, Anne Meehan, Cllr Michael Connolly and Jo Vahey, Senior Librarian, Galway County Council.



Mary Gucklam from Salthill with Margaret Hughes and Helen Keary from Moylough.



Katriona and Clare Long with Catherine Connolly from Mountbellew.