

O'Malley JOURNAL 10



O'Malley

GOLDEN JUBILEE

1953 - 2003

Denise O'Malley

O'Malley Journal 10

Golden Jubilee 1953-2003

It would certainly have raised the spirits of the founding fathers of the O'Malley Clan Association if they could have foreseen the day when the Clan would be observing the Golden Jubilee of its foundation. To have brought the O'Malleys together annually for fifty years without a break is a record unequalled among the clans of Ireland. It takes no small effort to achieve this, and we must remember the dedication and enthusiasm of all those who worked unremittingly down the years to make the annual rally a meaningful occasion. We present *O'Malley Journal 10* with pride as a very special contribution to our Golden Jubilee celebrations.

Sheila O'Malley Mulloy, Hon. Editor,
Ann O'Malley Kelly, Assistant Editor



'The Champ!' Maura O'Beirn McCarthy receives her golf prize from Chieftain Eoin O'Malley, Swinford, at Rally 2001. (Photo Michael O'Malley)



2002 Rally at Thirsk, North Yorkshire, England: 'We spread our wings'.
Front (from left): Ann O'Malley Kelly, Sheila O'Malley Mulloy, Kevin O'Malley (Chieftain), Ward O'Malley (Guardian Chieftain), Ellen O'Malley Dunlop. Back: Cormac O'Malley (hidden), Maurice O'Malley, Philip O'Malley Dunlop (Tánaiste), Peter McGee. (Photo courtesy Enda McCarthy).

FRONT COVER – Our O'Malley Clan Association Banner presented by the late Joseph O'Malley Blackwell, Chieftain 1987. (Photo Frank Dolan)

O'Malley Clan Committee

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Maurice O'Malley, Castlebar

Secretary:
Mary Jane O'Malley, Newport

Assistant Secretary:
Meike Blackwell, Newport

Treasurer:
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(Assistant Editor, *Journal*)
Don O'Malley Limerick
Ward O'Malley, Golden, Co. Tipperary
(Guardian Chieftain)

PHILIP O'MALLEY DUNLOP

Clan Chieftain 2002-2003

Philip O'Malley Dunlop is the son of the Right Revd Colin Dunlop (Church of England) and Mary Geraldine O'Malley, descendant of the Hawthorn Lodge O'Malleys. Philip was thus brought up in the precincts of great Cathedrals such as Durham and Lincoln and went to school as a chorister at Christ Church, Oxford, and at Westminster School, in the shadow of Westminster Abbey.

After reading Classics at Oxford, where he met his wife Anna, he followed a career teaching Latin, Greek and Classical History at Repton School, (notable for its cricket, music and drama) and at The Manchester Grammar (notable, or perhaps nowadays one should say notorious, for its high standards of academic achievement).

He published in 1973 *The Poems of Tibullus* (in the Penguin Classics series) and in 1987 *Short Latin Stories* (CUP). During the 70s and 80s he worked annually with archaeologists in South Wales on a variety of Mediaeval and Roman sites. After taking early retirement in 1992 he moved to Ireland a year later with the aim of restoring the old O'Malley home at Hawthorn Lodge.

Here he became deeply involved in the musical life of Mayo and divides his time between further work on the family home and pursuing his musical activities.



Philip O'Malley Dunlop
(Photo courtesy Anna O'Malley Dunlop)

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Guardian Chieftains of the Clan

1954-1959	John J. O'Malley, Westport.
1959-1982	Professor C. Conor O'Malley, Galway.
1984-1988	Martin O'Malley, Dublin.
1988-1991	Dr. Patrick Pearse O'Malley, Delgany, Co. Wicklow.
1991-1994	Gerry O'Malley, Bray, Co. Wicklow.
1994-1997	Sara O'Malley McInerney, Dublin.
1997-2000	Sheila O'Malley Mulloy, Westport
2000-2003	Ward O'Malley, Golden, Co. Tipperary

Chieftains of the Clan

1953	John J. O'Malley, Westport.	1978	Thomas J. O'Malley, Navan, Co. Meath.
1954	Prof. C. Conor O'Malley, Galway.	1979	Dr. Thomas O'Malley, Florida, U.S.A.
1955	Patrick E. O'Malley, Limerick.	1980	John E. O'Malley, Ardee, Co. Louth.
1956	Dr. P. Pearse O'Malley, Belfast.	1981	Grace O'Malley Purcell, Dublin.
1957	Charles O'Malley, B.D.S., Limerick.	1982	Declan O'Malley, Dublin.
1958	An tOllamh Tomás Ó Máille, Galway.	1983	Michael O'Malley, London.
1959	Charles O'Malley, Westport.	1984	Judge Peter O'Malley, Dublin.
1960	Prof. Michael G. O'Malley, Galway.	1985	Brian O'Malley, Boston, U.S.A.
1961	Bartley O'Malley, Dunmore, Co. Galway.	1986	Anthony O'Malley, Louisburgh, Co. Mayo.
1962	George O'Malley, Manchester.	1987	Joseph O'Malley Blackwell, Newport, Co. Mayo.
1963	Matthew O'Malley, Cleggan, Clifden, Co. Galway.	1988	Alice O'Malley, Chicago, U.S.A.
1964	Patrick O'Malley, V.S., Castlebar.	1989	Michael O'Malley, Ballynew, Castlebar.
1965	Thomas O'Malley, Chicago and Dublin.	1990	Sara O'Malley McInerney, Dublin.
1966	Prof. Eoin O'Malley, Dublin.	1991	Peter O'Malley McGee, Newport, Co. Mayo.
1967	George O'Malley, Casteltroy, Co. Limerick.	1992	Sheila O'Malley Mulloy, Westport.
1968	Stiofán Ó Máille, Galway.	1993	Ellen O'Malley Dunlop, Dublin.
1969	John O'Malley, Manchester.	1994	Cormac O'Malley, New York, U.S.A.
1970	Martin O'Malley, Dublin.	1995	Kitty O'Malley Harlow, Westport.
1971	Tim O'Malley, Limerick.	1996	Ann O'Malley Kelly, Galway.
1972	Gerry O'Malley, Ballycastle, Co. Mayo.	1997	Don O'Malley, Limerick.
1973	Ward O'Malley, Golden, Co. Tipperary.	1998	Maurice O'Malley, Castlebar, Co. Mayo.
1974	Richard Kilroy O'Malley, Clonbur, Co. Galway.	1999	Middleton O'Malley, Newport, Co. Mayo.
1975	Prof. Ethna O'Malley Gaffney, Dublin.	2000	Eoin O'Malley, Swinford, Co. Mayo.
1976	Michael O'Malley, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.	2001	Kevin O'Malley, Thirsk, North Yorkshire, England.
1977	Martin O'Malley, Tourmakeady, Co. Mayo.	2002	Philip O'Malley Dunlop, Castlebar.

HAWTHORN LODGE AND THOSE O'MALLEYS

Anna O'Malley Dunlop

Well, *I'm not* one of those O'Malleys, but 'O'Malleydom' seems to have taken over my life and changed my view of Irish history.

My husband Philip's mother, Mary Geraldine, God rest her, was a proper O'Malley, much to my surprise, as she seemed the perfect English Lady on first meeting. Her branch of the Belclare O'Malleys started their English adventure around 1837, when her great grandfather Peter Frederick had to emigrate from Hawthorn Lodge to make a living.

Two of his sons, Edward Loughlin and George Hunter gave rise, on the one hand to Sir Owen O'Malley who helped restore Rockfleet (Carrigahowley) Castle and was a co-founder of the Clan rally, and on the other, two generations later, to Philip who managed to do what Sir Owen couldn't – to buy back Hawthorn Lodge. When Owen came looking for it in the 1950s the Carson family still lived in the house and farmed the lands, so he had to 'make do' with Rossyvera and, of course, Granuaile's Castle of Rockfleet.



Hawthorn Lodge, Castlebar, Co. Mayo, now the home of Philip and Anna O'Malley Dunlop. (Photo courtesy Anna O'Malley Dunlop)

Mary Geraldine lost touch with the O'Malleys, (though she had visited Rossyvera a long time ago) and only a dim memory remained of a house called 'Lodge' somewhere in Mayo. It was a lost demesne. Myself, I had met Sir Owen once, when as Philip's fiancée, I was formally introduced to 'the head of the family'. We found little to say to each other: I didn't know then what I needed to ask him.

The story of how a chance purchase of Sheila Mulloy's book *O'Malley People and Places* led us to rediscover the ancestral home has been told many times before. Sitting by a turf fire in Westport, we opened the book to find an aerial photo of an old house and read a description of its people that matched what we knew of Philip's O'Malleys. The very last night of our holiday, another chance had us talking to a local man, who told us the house was still standing, but derelict, not far outside Castlebar. So we took a detour on the way to the Ferry, driving down a pot-holed avenue, new houses and bungalows creeping up it, and at the end of the road, came upon a frightful old ruin on a dark rainy morning. No view then of Croagh Patrick and the Partry Hills at the front or Nephin at the back: mist and drizzle covering all; smashed windows, closed shutters; a front door yawning open on one hinge in a travesty of welcome; grass-grown steps over a crumbling arch and farm rubbish everywhere.

I've spent my life rushing carelessly into all kinds of ruins – but not this one! Let Philip go if he wanted to. I felt a tremor of resentment, the ghost of old prejudice: what were those O'Malleys to a 'good' Irish Catholic like me? Too well-off to be 'souters', they must have been 'turncoats' anyway, if they'd managed to hold on to even as tawdry a 'Big House' as this. Ascendancy people: the house was surrounded with 'Protestant Trees'!

Alone on the steps, watching the rain sweeping across what surely must be an ancient Ring Fort at the top of the front lawn, I saw a car drive up. The owner, it seemed. A handsome tanned man to whom some apology and explanation were due: the old family home, etc.; a bit of potted history of O'Malleys living there from 1796, selling it to Carsons – where were *they*? Why, he'd bought it from them: for the land, but not to live in, or only while he built his new bungalow at the top of the Avenue. 'Maybe ye'd like to buy it then?', says he jokingly, and talked on about Grants we could get for doing it up: cool, not making a serious sales pitch. 'No fear!', says I to myself: he and his family should be living in it if it was that easy.

Nodding politely at him, I let it go in one ear and out the other. I felt sad to see what Lodge had come to (in England it would have been listed), but saw in its fate the march of time and the inevitable decay of monuments of a 'colonial' past

the New Irish Republic had chosen to forget as soon as it could.

Philip came out and was introduced. There was some shamefaced regret for the way the old house had been allowed to decline: 'It was O.K. when the Carsons left it.' Empty now for about fifteen years, it made a useful barn: he kept cows in the basement and calves in the large front room.

We said our goodbyes and 'Safe journey'. A little subdued, we headed for the Ferry and an English winter. It was that English winter that settled our fate. Jane O'Malley, may God have mercy on her, sent over two great tomes her father Sir Owen had written: *O'Malleys in the XVIIIth Century* and *O'Malleys 1820-1860* and I read them cover to cover.

They were made up, for the most part, of letters written by the Belclare O'Malleys, the earliest in 1688. The story they told was heart-rending: an ancient Gaelic family, the line descended from Granuaile herself, through Bourkes, Brownes and Birminghams and back into O'Malleys again in 1756, when Margery Birmingham married George O'Malley of Snugborough, grandfather of Peter Frederick who, born at Lodge, had taken the line across to England. The marvel was how they had managed to hold onto their family identity and some kind of position in the county for so long: from pre-history in the crannóg, in fact, until the day, in 1905, when Lodge was sold to the Carsons. I already knew something of Granuaile's struggle to survive: her historic meeting with Elizabeth I; how skilfully she'd run with the hare and hunted with the hounds, so her son could be First Viscount Mayo, and her descendants safe as she could make them.

In these papers I found a consistent desire to preserve this family inheritance, and later, when all seemed lost, a deep emotional longing to return and belong again to the soil of Mayo. This longing, at least, was familiar to me, from stories, poems and ballads, as the age-old cry of the Irish exile, and I felt the stirrings of sympathy towards those O'Malleys.

I began to think that George's father Loughlin could be forgiven, who, in 1722, conformed to the established Church, so that he could ride a good horse of his own breeding, and wield a sword with which to fight his upstart Cromwellian adversaries. I saw that, in a notoriously rational age like the early eighteenth century, family pride might be a sufficient reason to leave the Catholic Church of one's ancestors. (Loughlin's own father Teige outlived him and died in the Old Faith).

I began to understand how a family, feeling it had still something to lose, could put its own survival in the forefront and claw back some of the lands forfeited

during the long wars in Elizabeth's time and in late years, always on the losing side, fighting for Charles and James against Cromwell and William of Orange.

My image of Irish history, of which we learn so little in England, began to shift like a vast frozen iceflow and melt, dangerously, before my eyes. Being myself an Irish exile, I had brought from home a wonderful tale of England as Perfidious Albion (the enemy from the time of the Norman Conquest) and Ireland bound in chains. The ensuing centuries I had thought a steady progress towards a pure ideal of Freedom, to be realised, one day, in a United Ireland.

Reading the letters, intensely personal voices from Ireland's past, I began to feel this tale was too consistent: altogether too shapely to be true. Who said 'The truth is never pure and rarely simple'? History itself has been described as only a kind of myth invented by the victors: an epic tale conveyed in ballads, legends and ceremonials designed to tell us who we are today.

It was shocking to find that, seen from this epic viewpoint, the O'Malleys had often been 'on the wrong side', though *they* would have seen it as making a stand for 'law and order'. They had fought, at least Margery's brother Jack had fought, against those they considered rebels in the American War of Independence. In the Rising of 1798 they had defended the status quo against General Humbert's forces who invaded Mayo, took Castlebar and sacked Snugborough and Hawthorn Lodge.

Though struggling to keep their heads above water as eighteenth-century landed gentry, they looked back to a Golden Age as Celtic Chieftains, and were certainly not going to give their hard-won territories to a Frenchman and a pack of landless Irish rebels. Their Catholic tenants too, who formed the local militia, had also much to lose. Who knew what Napoleon might do to Ireland had Humbert won?

So they saw it at the time. A lot has been said, sung and written about this Rising, much of it long after it took place: tragic and glorious for the most part, woven firmly into that great epic of Ireland's Freedom. Here were some ordinary, high-spirited Irish people, *on the other side*, who lived through it with courage, and, above all, good humour, determined to win yet able to forgive their misguided compatriots who, in their eyes, followed the cause of a Franco-Irish Republic.

Well, of course, you may say, they came out on the winning side this time: we wouldn't even know about them, now, if they'd lost. I'm not so sure: losing was something they did rather well. True children of Granuaile, they were survivors, after all. Later sons of this house fought in India and were prepared to

give their lives. The military tradition lived on and the family archives have letters from Balaclava and other far-flung battles.

Not so easy for me, *now*, to wipe all this out of Irish history and label those O'Malleys as not Irish at all: mere colonists, supporters of a tyrannical foreign regime. If they were so, then millions of other Irish people were like-minded. The label has merely been misapplied. There are more ways of being Irish, perhaps, than we have dreamt of in our recent philosophy.

When Mary McAleese stood next to Elizabeth II at the Flanders War Memorial we saw, at last, that we could acknowledge together and with pride the courage and determination of the countless Irish men and women who have given their lives in battle: worthy successors, perhaps, of the Wild Geese and all those nameless compatriots who left their homeland to follow a dream and fell to rest in foreign fields.

For me there had been dark places in Irish history, interpreted in 'a language that the strangers do not know.' Why look too closely? Restoring the old house, and living in it from day to day has been an exile's return to a complex and painful historical inheritance which I imagined, after long years away, had ceased to trouble me.

Anna O'Malley Dunlop (née Braazil) was six years old when she left Ennistymon, Co. Clare for London, England. She met her husband Philip while she was reading English at St. Anne's College, Oxford. They have four children: Gráinne, James, Sam and Agatha Jane. She took early retirement from teaching and returned with Philip to County Mayo to buy back and restore the derelict eighteenth-century family home, Hawthorn Lodge, Castlebar. She has contributed to the *O'Malley Journal* and *Cathair na Mart* (Journal of the Westport Historical Society), and is now working on an edition of O'Malley family letters.

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

Meike Blackwell

It was the 27th of May 1941.

On this day, when I was seven years old, I heard the name of Ireland for the first time. It did not mean much yet, but I did learn that it was an island far to the North-West and not too far from the place where the battleship *Bismarck* had finally lost its fight and sunk to the bottom of the sea.

My mother and grandmother were sitting glued to our small black radio in the big drawing-room in our house in Detmold, Germany. The atmosphere was sombre and I felt very uncomfortable, and yet I was drawn to them and sat on my stool and tried to listen. My father was on that ship, that I knew. I had just recently received a letter from him telling me to be a good girl and to try and control my temper as he had had to learn as a boy. But now it seemed that this big ship was sinking.

Where was he? Was he still on the ship? Was he well and was he going to come home? All the family that day hoped and prayed. At thirty-eight years of age, my father, Helmut Albrecht, was a Lieutenant Commander on the *Bismarck* and was second gunnery officer in charge of one of the forward turrets. He and some 2000 other men never returned home again.

Ireland then disappeared from my consciousness for many years. First I had to grow up during the last years of the war which in itself often seemed like a battle. Although Detmold was not a main target for air raids due to its location amongst the hills of the Teuteburger Forest, we did have several air raids, etc. For a child all very exciting. I even 'raced' the planes with friends across open fields, much to the horror of our parents. The daily battle to procure food was very time-consuming and full of adventures, but as the years passed we became very inventive.

Then, one day in April 1945, the last exhausted German soldiers left Detmold. The local 'government' had long since departed, in fact right after the daily shelling of the town had begun. Before nightfall that day, the first American GIs entered the streets searching every house along the way. That night, we could sleep in our own beds again, no air raids, and best of all, gone was the fear that the Russians might be the first to capture our town . . .

It was in America in 1955 that Ireland surfaced again. A German book called *Irland Heimat der Regenbogen* ('Ireland, home of the rainbow') by E. A. Johann captivated our minds. Then I met Joe O'Malley Blackwell and Ireland came to the forefront of many, if not all, our conversations. He told me so much of it, of the country, the people, the climate, its history and especially the history of his ancestors, the O'Malleys of Clew Bay in Co. Mayo, that when we finally came over here to live in 1970 and make our home at Ross, his family's place which he had always loved, it was a real homecoming.

By now, Ireland is in my blood. and I can't imagine that any other country would ever feel like home again.

Meike Blackwell studied Physiotherapy at Heidelberg University in Germany, and worked as a physiotherapist in the United States, where she lived from 1955-70. She also worked as a volunteer there with the archaeological department at the University of Chicago. Meike has been living in Ross House, Newport, since 1970 with her late husband Major Joseph O'Malley Blackwell, and has two children Kirsten and Alex. She is a member of the O'Malley Clan Committee, and her husband was elected Clan Chieftain in 1987.



Left to right: Dr. M. O'Malley, Yorkshire; Meike Blackwell, Newport; John Mulloy, Westport; Mary O'Beirn, Dublin; Sheila Mulloy, Westport; Maura and Cormac O'Malley, New York at Thirsk 2002. (Photo courtesy Enda McCarthy)

PÁDRAIC Ó CONAIRE

*León Ó Broin*¹

I have a very clear recollection of a beautiful week in the summer of 1918 which I spent in the National Library working through Pádraic Ó Conaire's *Seacht mBuaidh an Éirghe Amach* with the aid of Father Dineen's Dictionary. The book was a revelation to me and a source of great inspiration. Before it arrived on the market, I had begun to believe that contemporary Irish literature, by some peculiar twist of fate, was destined to concern itself with the banalities of agricultural life and as I was a city youth myself, the unhappy feeling which that belief engendered was a thing I had to battle with or alternatively to surrender my growing interest in the national language. Those years after 1916 were a period when an indiscriminating patriotic spirit kept Irish boys employed at strange tasks – my lovely summerweek lost in the contemplation of an Irish book is an example – but until an acquaintance had been made with Ó Conaire in his writings many of them who had turned in enthusiasm to the language began, like myself, to fear that even a white-hot patriotism would not suffice to maintain their interest in a language which was being used merely to comment, without any pretence of artistry, on matters with which youth had not then any particular concern.

I could not see then, as I do now, that a purpose was being served by the recording of everything the native Irish speaker thought and did about the farm, but that purpose was useful only as a means of disseminating knowledge concerning the idioms and vocabulary of the language. Its usefulness stopped there and the person learning Irish who wished to live his life in much the same way as the average intelligent English-speaking person lives has found that, with very rare exceptions such as Micheál Breathnach's *Seilg i measg na nAlp* in the line of essays and Pearse's contributions in the domain of the shortstory, there was nothing which he could read with relish. Ó Conaire's *Seacht mBuaidh* was a revelation that brought about a revolution in Irish literature. Some years earlier there had been published in book form his short novel or long short-story *Deoraidheacht* and others like *Na Naoi nArabaigh* and *Le Grádh do Mhnaoi* which appeared in Irish reviews before the Rising had marked him out for what I may, for want of a better word, call distinction in the small and generally undistinguished band who were writing in Irish at that time. *Seacht mBuaidh* raised Pádraic Ó Conaire out of that class completely and placed him on a plane so immeasurably higher that the Gaelic world justifiably thought that the strivings of the preceding quarter of a century to revive the language had not been in vain.

1. From *Capuchin Annual*, 1934.

To have produced at last a native writer whose work was comparable both as to style and matter with his contemporaries abroad was, to the revivalists, a sure indication that the corner had been turned. These were certainly my own reactions as I finished reading the story of Pól Dubh with which *Seacht mBuaidh* opens and conviction replaced all doubts by the time I had reached the end of the swirling episode of the *File Caol Dubh*. That this was the experience of many others also there can be no denying: Ó Conaire's craftsmanship in these seven 'virtues of the Rising' was a revelation: the revolution consisted in the comparative success which Gaelic literature, inspired largely by the book, subsequently achieved in the race to catch up on time. Writers felt the urge to venture into paths which an inferiority complex had theretofore prevented them from treading: the sayings and doings of Tadhg Gabha, Páidin Rua Ó Ceallaigh and the rest of them which young and old, in the days prior to the Rising, had had to suffer at breakfast, dinner and supper, began almost immediately to serve their legitimate purpose as material for the folklorist and the dialectologist, and in their stead, stories, original or translated, began to be made available for and appreciated by the ordinary reader. In the results that quickly flowed from it, *Seacht mBuaidh* was itself, in very truth, the eighth virtue of the Rising.

In the winter of that same year, 1918, I first met Ó Conaire in the flesh. He was standing, smoking quietly, in the hall of the Central Branch of the Gaelic League in Parnell Square, apparently unrecognised by that steady stream of people whom he whimsically watched as they passed in to the night classes. He looked fresher than at any subsequent period of his life. I did not know who he was but I can distinctly recall the impression his first appearance made on me: the pear-shaped head inclined a little to one side, the deep broad furrowed brow, the peering eyes, the laughing, slightly cynical, lips, the pipe stuck in the corner of his mouth, the old hat so poised on his head as to give one the feeling that the wearer was oblivious of its existence, the long lounge coat and baggy trousers – everything combined to make him an original figure even in that Branch where unusual types abounded. I was prompted to go over and speak to him. We introduced ourselves and soon, as was my wont in those days, I found myself pitting my immature views on life and literature against his convictions which were grounded on a dearly-bought experience of both. His face, at close quarters, was neither harsh nor pleasant: as Éamonn Ó Neill has suggested to me, it seemed to embody, like the face of the Wandering Jew, the story of a nation's life. It revealed an interior acquaintance with the joys and sorrows of existence, which in force had begot a patient indifference. His voice, I thought, was inclined to drawl and was a trifle hard. But, that night, I was very enthusiastic about my discovery of the genius of *Seacht mBuaidh* and with a display of vanity for which I must be forgiven, I proudly 'hawked' him about on a tour of the Branch as if I had known him all my life. He had, in the course of our conversation made a kind

reference to something or other I had just had published and as I showed him off to the Library staff I fondly believed that I had, as in fact I had, hitched my wagon to a star.

Ó Conaire was at this time not more than thirty years of age: there were only ten years of his life to run. That life, however, had been very full: he had crowded into it a vast wealth of experience and his extraordinarily vivid imagination enabled him to the last to adapt any and every event or circumstance to some personally-felt emotion. It is to this linking of external happenings to his own thoughts that I attribute much of the felicity and all the realism which are the main characteristics of Ó Conaire's writings. I don't think he ever felt disposed or thought it necessary to re-write anything – there is, of course, evidence in his books that he gave some care to the polishing of phrases – but the stories all bear the imprint of having been thought out fully and recorded in the form in which they finally took shape in his mind. The very simplicity of the telling points to this for when a plot is dimly perceived the telling must of necessity be laboured. Nobody has questioned the essential worth of this characteristic of simplicity in Ó Conaire's works, but there have been unfortunately many who have found fault with the alleged paucity of his vocabulary and who have talked rather glibly about his bad, ungrammatical Irish. Now this fault-finding, to my mind, reveals an absolute inability to appreciate the facts. In the first place, it was Ó Conaire's misfortune to have been born out of his proper time and setting. Had he been one in time with Eoin Rua Ó Súilleabháin – and the tradition which has grown up about him would seem to indicate that with the poet he would have had much in common – Ó Conaire would have been assured of a purity of diction before which the modern purists would have fallen down in obeisance. Or had he lived in that future age when Irish will once again, we trust, be the nation's language for all purposes of trade, industry, art and culture – and, in passing, it may be remarked that Ó Conaire's works almost seem to have been written for such an age – his very association in such a milieu with a language, living and fully-developed, would justify criticism of any grammatical impurities and paucity of vocabulary then noticeable in his writings. In point of fact, however, Ó Conaire's lot was cast amongst very unappreciative people, learners of uneven ability and scholars, narrow-minded and hypercritical. The former used Ó Conaire's writings as text books, the latter, if they deigned to read them at all, only saw in them reason to lament the death of Keating.

Looking back at the years from 1914 to the inception of the Saorstát, the ridiculousness in such a period of an author, no matter how distinguished, seeking to make a living out of writing in Irish is too obvious for comment. And yet, for one cause or another, that was Ó Conaire's position. He was the first professional literary man, using the Irish language, the country had produced for centuries –

but what a profession! When in 1933, apart from the Government's publications scheme, an artist has to give financial guarantees before the ordinary commercial houses will touch an Irish manuscript, think of the cold, depressing atmosphere Ó Conaire had to fight against nineteen years earlier. I have no real idea of what he was paid for *Seacht mBuaidh*, *Stol Éabha*, and *Béal an Uaignis* but, offhand, I should say that what he got would not keep a person in moderate comfort for a twelvemonth. This starvation-line commercialism was, in my opinion, largely responsible for the steps to which Ó Conaire was subsequently driven, and to the irregular and inadequate payments made to him may be attributed a good deal of the instability noticed in his private life. He was, of course, himself responsible for much of the misfortune that befell him; nevertheless, I cannot help feeling that it would be wrong to withhold from him a generous measure of praise for his adherence to a life of sacrifice, in the conviction that the only sure method of making Irish live was to act on the assumption that it was, in fact, very much alive: to write an Irish literature fit for an Irish-speaking people and to trust to God and them to sustain him in doing so. If Pádraic had chosen to follow it, there was for him a career, with money and a larger circle of admirers, in English letters. But for no reason that I know other than a sheer love of his race and the country of his birth, Ó Conaire gave his life to Gaelic literature and thought nothing of the cost. He had made other sacrifices, too, in the same cause. A good position in the British Civil Service was abandoned on the outbreak of the Great War: Pádraic dived clear of the whirlpool which carried away to the fields of Flanders so many of Ireland's sons, then resident in Great Britain. The new Ireland in which he found himself was a centre of great mental and physical agitation – a real spawning bed of literature – and Ó Conaire, though not as fully as we might have desired, turned that agitation to good account in his own works.

It would, however, be a great mistake to imagine that Pádraic was ever self-conscious of the sacrifices he had made. His wonderful sense of humour prevented him from experiencing any regrets on that score. He had, of his own volition, broken with the traditional regularity of a Civil Service job and the freedom to rove where he thought fit, to see what he wanted to see, to do and say just as his whims dictated was ample recompense for everything. As a wandering scribe Pádraic was in his element: he was responding to the call of his blood: he was one with a legion of Gaelic writers, Filí Fáin, who in former centuries had defied physical discomfort out of an innate craving for the independence of spirit felt on majestic mountain peaks, in dark pine forests or beside cool brooks. 'Up, friend of my heart! Turn your back on the city, forget your troubles and come along with me into the wilderness. I have much to offer you: ease and peace, happiness and pleasure; knowledge of and acquaintance with God's creatures big and little; hospitality and delight – and the south wind that will gladden your heart, however sad you may feel to-night.'

Ó Conaire was always flitting the city and making for the wilderness. Occasionally, as if from nowhere, he appeared in the Dublin streets – a strange, almost weird figure. His journeying through Ireland, whether alone, or with his ‘little black ass’, had given him a long grotesque stride, and the ring of his stick on the pavements had a timbre of its own so that one felt his approach before he actually came in sight. Sometimes, he wore a long flowing striped coat, of a gaudy hue which attracted much attention – particularly on summer afternoons in Grafton Street when the usual fashion parade was at its loveliest. The Gaelic clubs of the city and certain hostelries would animatedly discuss his latest arrival and then in a day or two almost as animatedly would comment on his departure for ‘God knows where’. A sale of a manuscript usually increased the length of his sojourns, for while the money lasted Pádraic dispensed it gaily. He bought fish and chips for the urchins in the slums, he played ‘nap’ with newsboys, he drank a glass or two or maybe more with the literary gents of the town and then – Connemara, his own Connemara, or Wicklow saw him for a spell.

During the Tan war, Pádraic had many trying experiences. He moved about as if conditions were perfectly normal: he found himself locked up in Police Barracks for being found out after Curfew, a stranger in remote country districts, or for cheeking the R.I.C. in his barbarous patois. Only the good nature of a sergeant here and there saved his life on occasion. In the City I often met him after Curfew hours; he appeared to be completely oblivious of the danger that lurked round every corner. He was frequently housed in the Bridewell for breaches of martial law and was as often again forced to spend the night in some of the lanes or back streets. One night, at least, he spent in St. Stephen’s Green. He asked a friend to ‘give him a lift’ over the railings and succeeded in dodging the park-keeper until the morning. When he next met the friend his first remark was that he had discovered a peculiar duck’s cry to which he had spent the best part of the night listening. On another night about the Christmas of 1920 – he was then in lodgings in York Street – he got mixed up in an affair with two British military cars. Pádraic in making his way home sometime after midnight had to cross Aungier Street which was the main traffic artery between Dublin Castle and Portobello and Wellington Barracks. It was, therefore, a street to be watched. Pádraic, however, took the middle of the road with considerable abandon and only was brought to a sense of his danger when he heard two cars without lights approaching from opposite directions. He started to zig-zag, the cars did likewise, the occupants of the cars shouted and opened fire. In the mêlée one officer was killed but Pádraic succeeded in getting into shelter. He had unwittingly struck a blow for his country. Some weeks later the British decided to comb out the ‘Dardanelles’ area in an effort to capture some of the Volunteers responsible for the almost continuous series of ambushes. York Street came into the area and Pádraic’s lodgings were entered in due course, one very cold night. I had already been taken captive myself and as I stood at Edmond’s Corner in Aungier Street,

under a guard of Tommies, I watched with some glee the lights travelling up and down the lodging house in the street opposite and wondered how many minutes would elapse before Pádraic would join me. A prisoner was eventually marched over in the darkness towards our group but to my surprise it wasn’t Pádraic – he with his customary amazing luck had gone scot-free – but an ex-member of a British Labour Corps whose crime was the possession of some souvenirs of the Great War. Pádraic used to relate, with great gusto, the story of that night’s raid on the lodging house. A Tan appeared by the bedside and flashed a light on Pádraic’s face. Having growled and snarled a bit he proceeded to ask questions which Pádraic answered in his best Cockney accent – his knowledge of London here stood him in good stead. The interview ended abruptly, according to Pádraic, by the Tan asking the rather inane question:

‘Where do Shin Foyners go when they die?’

‘Eh!’ replied Pádraic.

‘Right,’ said the Tan and shook hands.

While the stories about his life are valuable the truest index to his real character is his writings: what was seen in the personal behaviour of the wanderer moreover matters little save to explain that in his rambles he had the opportunity of meeting and studying the rather strange types found in some of his stories. In what he has added to the corpus of Gaelic literature we find a grim realistic prose, a soft humour and a charming naïveté, traits begotten of his own experiences, or flowing naturally from a heart that loved all humanity and the changing wonders of life and landscape. Strain there is none in phrase or subject, neither is there rhetoric or verbosity, and his rare touches of sarcasm are so gentle as to give a keynote to the man: the camaraderie of him, his love of companionship, his noble-mindedness and his charity. In these great qualities the external defects are totally submerged.

He died in the Richmond Hospital on the 6th October, 1928, practically destitute: his pipe, tobacco and an apple were, I think, his sole possessions. But, ironically enough, in the intervening five years money has been collected to erect a monument in his honour in Galway, where his body was laid to rest. His works are scattered, some of them out of print, others hidden away in old reviews or obscure newspapers. No effort has been made to collect and correlate them or to write his biography. Is it too much to suggest that those who knew him best should even now pay a tribute to his genius that should have been paid during his lifetime?

León Ó Broin (1902-1990), civil servant and writer, wrote extensively in Irish and English. The first administrative officer appointed to the new civil service in 1923, he served in the Department of Finance, eventually becoming Secretary of the Department of Posts and Telegraphs. He is survived by a daughter and four sons.

STATUE IN EYRE SQUARE

Dell Allen

There, carved in stone, you seem absorbed in thought,

*Recording in the music of your words
Some legend sponsored by a fiddler's tune,
The sighing of the wind, the song of birds.*

*Close by this square in boyhood you explored
Each lamp-lit walk and narrow cobbled street;*

*You heard the lively clamour of the docks
Or sailed in spirit with the Claddagh fleet.
Beneath the Spanish Arch you often passed,
Or leaned upon a wall beside the weir,
And westward, followed little vagrant roads
That climb between the hills and disappear.*

In London's lonely years you made new friends

*Bewildered exiles in an alien land,
Helping at times a weary coster wheel
His apple-barrow through the crowded Strand.
But you remembered rock-encrusted fields
Near Carraroe, and narrow paths that twist
By low stone walls – the fuchsia hedge in bloom,
The herring-boats homecoming through the mist.*

*Your truant spirit called you back again
To tramp the dusty roads. Contented now,
And unhurried, with ashplant lightly gripped
And careless hat pushed back upon your brow,
Through village street, through market-place or fair,*

*Threading your way haphazardly among
The restless flock and herds-you talked with men,
Slow-spoken, fluent in their native tongue.*

*I still can see you on the Spiddal road
Plodding along, heedless of wind and rain,
Or on the way from Cong to Ballinrobe,
Yarning with gypsies in some sheltered lane.*

*My needles are rusty, my fingers slow
And few remember how well I could sew.
When a neighbour gives me a simple task
A pipe of tobacco is all I ask.
But most of the time I dwell in the past –
The roads are lonely and I am the last
The last of the journeyman tailors.*



Pádraic Ó Conaire, statue by Albert Power in Eyre Square, Galway.

Dell Allen (1898-1985), daughter of Thomas Francis Joyce of the Maam Valley and Sabina Conroy, of Ros Muc, Co. Galway, was a first cousin of Pádraic Ó Conaire, the well-known Irish language author. She had many articles and poems published in newspapers and magazines, and in 1975 published a book of her collected poems entitled *Before the Rain Began*.

ARCHDEACON MARK D. CONROY (1858-1947)

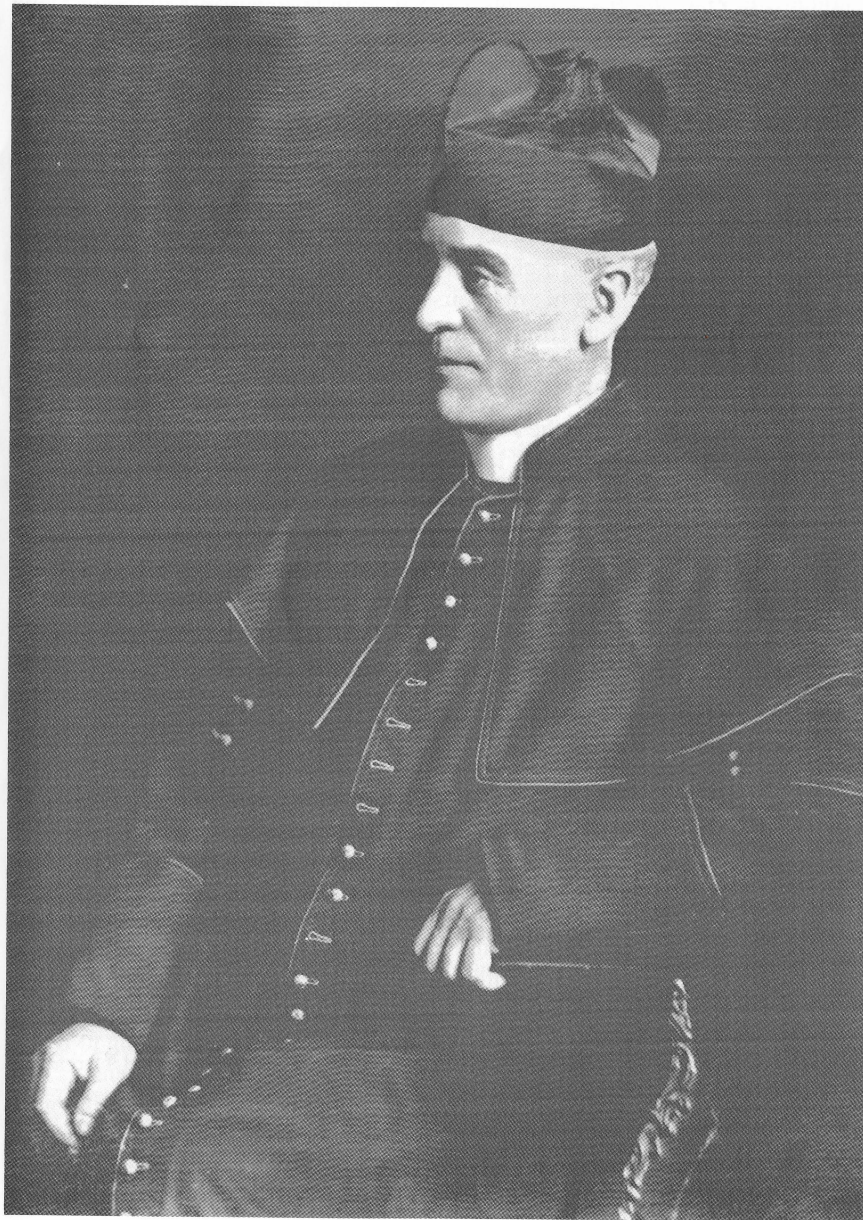
Jane Conroy

My grand-uncle Mark D. Conroy was half O'Malley, his mother Mary being the daughter of Peter O'Malley (1800-1881) of Kilmilkin. He was also an exemplary man of the church, whose public life is quite well documented. At the time of his death he was sufficiently prominent for the funeral service to be reported in the newspapers. Another more personal source of information is his own short narration of his working life, written in 1942-1943, at the request of the Bishop of Galway, Michael Browne, and not at that time intended for publication. The brief short account of his life is based on those sources. I am indebted to Ann Kelly for the newspaper account reprinted below and to Paddy Keady for background family information.

Mark Conroy's mother, Mary Grace O'Malley (1835-1896), was Peter O'Malley's daughter by his third wife. She was famous to all of us when we were children because we had the notion that she was a bride at fourteen. In fact she was sixteen when she married Patrick Conroy of Garafin, Rosmuc. Her husband was an energetic man who not only ran his business in Garafin, trading by sea with Galway, Aran and much of Connemara, but also dealt in cattle and sheep for which he held or rented land in widely dispersed areas, and contracted to carry out roadmaking and building work, such as the picturesque old wood-surfaced bridge at Bealadangan, now replaced by a wider modern one. Together they had thirteen children, only one of whom died in infancy. Mark was their fourth child, born when Mary was twenty-three. She seems to have been a favourite with her grandfather, Patrick O'Malley, known as An Sean-Mháilleach, who was himself married to another Conroy, Sabina, daughter of Lawrence Conroy of Ballinrobe. He would travel on horseback from Kilmilkin to visit Mary and family in Garafin, in part along the old bridle-path from near Maam Cross to Gortmore on the Galway-Carna road, which is now best known as a hiking trail. Conor O'Malley, in his 'Memories of a Connemara Childhood' (*O'Malley Journal* 9) gives details of this colourful figure, who died in Garafin in 1864 aged 96.

The connection between the Kilmilkin and Garafin families can be seen in the ownership patterns which accompanied it. By the 1860s the O'Malleys owned the township of Oorid next to the township of Gortmore belonging to the Conroys, five miles from Garafin, while in O'Malley territory, some miles north of Kilmilkin, the O'Malleys and the Conroys respectively owned the neighbouring

townlands of Tawnaleen and Shranaha. Despite being ordained a priest in 1884, Mark Conroy would have had a claim on these and other properties, but in a legal document he formally waived his rights in favour of his brother, my grand-father



Archdeacon Mark D. Conroy. (Photo courtesy Jane Conroy)

Patrick D. Conroy. The other members of that numerous family were Thomas, who started a business in Galway and was the father of the writer Pádraic Ó Conaire; Mary-Anne who married John Joyce of Oughterard; John C. who became a solicitor in Galway; Peter Joseph who set up in business in Kilkieran; Delia who married John William King; Sabina who married Thomas Francis Joyce Muintireoin, Maam; Catherine who became a Mercy nun and Superior of her convent; Michael who became a doctor, and Anthony and James, who both studied medicine in Edinburgh and emigrated to Saint-Paul, Minnesota.

Mark, or 'the Canon', as he has always been called in the family in spite of having risen to the rank of Archdeacon in 1939, was educated at Bartley Keane's school, Rosmuc, the Jesuits' School in Galway and Maynooth College. Of the first of these he records, in his memoirs, its rather challenging curriculum and notes that pupils came there from the Maam Valley as 'schools were not allowed to be built by the landlords of that district' – a difficulty which was also in part overcome by the use of Kilmilkin church for classes for the children of some families. He was attracted to the Jesuit order but was advised 'for health reasons' to first follow the Maynooth route. Later on, it was because of 'still more enfeebled health' that his ordination was delayed for a year. Nonetheless, his first curacy in Carraroe and Lettermullen (1886-90) saw him regularly perform feats of physical endurance, dictated by the nature of the parish. On one particular Christmas he returned from Rosmuc to Carraroe on the 24th, then travelled two miles on horseback, two miles on foot and two miles by sea, during a storm, to Lettermullen, said early Mass there on Christmas morning, walked several miles to Gorumna under frequent showers as day was breaking, returned by curragh to Carraroe, said his second and third Masses, went to Dangan on a sick call to two comatose typhus patients, got to Kilbrean too late to share the priest's Christmas dinner and then walked the two miles to his mother's home in Garafin, where he was glad to have the remains of the family's meal.

This was a time of partial famine and of the Carraroe evictions, which became a 'cause célèbre'. He was actively involved in resisting these, a fact which long remained in people's memories of him: sixty years later, when he died one of the newspaper headings read 'Link with Land League Days Severed'. While acting as an intermediary between the landlady, Mrs Kirwan of Blindwell, Tuam, and the people, he underlined his identification with the latter by choosing to live in a hut which had been built by the Land League for an evicted tenant, then afterwards exhibited in Dublin and finally acquired by him through the good offices of Ada Yates, a Protestant, who had taught lace-making in the area as a charitable work. He featured in English and Irish newspapers' illustrated reports of the actual evictions, alongside 'a Conservative K.C. and a Gladstonian Liberal', and he himself telegraphed reports to the *Freeman's Journal*. Meanwhile he had

begun with great energy a building programme which resulted in a new church, school and school residence in Lettermullen, and the presbytery in Carraroe.

In 1890 he returned to Galway as Diocesan secretary, curate of St. Nicholas' Parish and assistant chaplain to the Magdalen Asylum, as it was called, and to Galway gaol. Two of the more famous prisoners he met there were the Parnellite MPs, William O'Brien and John Dillon. On at least one occasion he said prayers and preached in Irish, an innovation in the gaol. O'Brien put his incarceration to good use by writing part of *A Queen of Men: Granuaile (1898)*, and learning Irish from the young chaplain, as he records in *Irish Ideas (1893)* and *Evening Memories (1920)*. His wife, Sophie Raffalovich, also published some of the young priest's letters to her husband in *The Love Letters and the Prison Letters of William O'Brien (1929)*.

There then followed one of the most dramatic periods in Mark Conroy's life. From 1893-1898, as P.P. of Killannin near Moycullen, he had the task of resolving what came to be known as 'the Killannin Schism'. Certainly it was a small schism but feelings ran high. The rectification of parish and diocesan boundaries in the late nineteenth century had transferred Killannin from Tuam to Galway diocese, a move which displeased the then P.P., Fr Coyne, a popular man who was involved with the Land League and not unlike my grand-uncle in his help to the evicted. When he was over-ruled by Bishop McEvilly he instigated proceedings and set out for Rome to put his case to the Holy See. The Bishop took the opportunity to send in a curate, who fared very poorly and was soon even denied access to the church. For a time the parish remained without a priest. At this point my grand-uncle, aged thirty-five, was asked to step in. These events, and the manner in which the problem was finally resolved are related in detail in his memoirs. For him it included a period of ostracization by the schismatics and a period of police protection around his residence, where he also said Mass for those parishioners who accepted him. Something of the tension of those days is evident in his memoirs: 'Every Sunday and holiday they (schismatics) watched along the roads and took down the names of all who were going to Mass at my residence in order, they said, to report to Fr Coyne.' He taught catechism in the schools, and attended sick beds when called, and even when not. 'On one occasion even when [I was] sent for, a neighbouring man came into the house and ordered me to leave, and the poor old sick woman said "For God's sake go or they will kill me."' I ordered him to leave, explaining how unchristian was his conduct and he withdrew.' Eventually he effected a forcible repossession of the church, under a hail of stones. When Fr Coyne, having failed in Rome, returned to Galway he received a warm welcome from his followers. Some months passed, the church was taken again by the schismatics, they were ejected with police backup, and a case ensued which was tried in Dublin and reported widely, as were the two

appeal cases taken by Fr Coyne. The latter also took an action against the *Freeman's Journal*. When eventually peace returned to Killanin and Mark Conroy was sent to Spiddal, he took with him a 'heavy load of debt' incurred during his four year struggle for the diocese, for although his opponents were funded through an appeal in an English newspaper, 'on [his] side there were no funds, Diocesan or parochial, lay or ecclesiastical, to help.'

The years as P.P. of Spiddal (1897-1909) were in marked contrast. An altogether more peaceable flock awaited him there, and his main antagonists, the members of the 'Irish Church Missions to Roman Catholics' appear to have made little headway. One family of what he calls 'perverts', meaning converts to Protestantism, who settled in his parish he eventually turned back into Catholics. He was able to pursue his energetic fund-raising and building, the outcome this time being the much admired church in Spiddal designed by William Scott. It was completed in 1908, and is now considered to be the first Irish Romanesque church. My grand-uncle chose Scott on the recommendation of Edward Martyn of Tullira and the choice was a fortunate one. As he remarks in his memoirs, 'more has been written about this Irish Romanesque church on account of its design than about all the outworn debased Gothic churches in Ireland.' Jeanne Sheehy in her 1980 book *The Rediscovery of Ireland's Past. The Celtic Revival 1830-1930* writes that this small stone parish church . . . became an important monument of the Celtic revival.

The foundation stone was laid in 1904, and bears an inscription in Irish which includes the words: 'The Irish-Romanesque design of this church is by the architect William Scott, of Dublin; the outline and structure are after the model of the architecture of Éire in the days of saints and ollamhs before the coming of the Gall.' The parish priest, Father Conroy, said it was the beginning of a new school of Irish architecture. It predates the Honan Chapel in Cork by a dozen years. Lord Killanin also took a close interest in its construction and there were various significant donations. For this rather expensive church, by the standards of the day, money had to be raised in Ireland and in America, but Mark Conroy on leaving the parish the year after its completion contributed £120 of his own to wipe out the debt.

Similarly, during his next assignment in Lisdoonvarna where he completed the building of the Church, and the improvements to the succursal churches at Killilagh and Killeaney, he contributed 5% of all costs from his own funds. The Lisdoonvarna 'Spa Trust', no doubt at his suggestion, commissioned William Scott, by then professor of Architecture in the National University, to draw up plans for a large spa building, but the 1914-1918 war put paid to that project, and development was restricted to a new park, and improvements to existing buildings.

He remarks that the troubles arising from the 'Irish-English' and civil war were rather serious in North Clare. It was his fate to have another parish there, being sent to Ennistymon in 1928. There he found his plans to build a new Presbytery frustrated by disagreements among his predecessors and himself. His next and final parish was Oughterard (1931-1947) which offered a new outlet for his enthusiasm for designing and building. Within a fortnight he had persuaded the Bishop, Thomas O'Doherty, that the church needed restoration. However, differences of opinion arose between them on the choice of architect and details of the plans. The Canon gave way to the Bishop, but acerbically summarizes the outcome as follows: 'the original Church might he described as debased Gothic and the present Church is Gothic debased and set awry.' Nonetheless he clearly took comfort from the fact that among other embellishments, it gained some fine Harry Clarke windows, and an altar in black Galway and green Connemara marble.

From anecdote and oral testimony it is clear that, although a strict man, he was liked and held in high regard by his parishioners, and from his private memoirs it is clear that he genuinely cared for them. His was a strong character and I doubt if he was particularly diplomatic with his various bishops. There is a definite hint of criticism of their decisions at several points in his memoirs. Nonetheless he was respected by them. The following extract from the *Connacht Tribune*, Saturday 30 August 1947, which summarises the funeral oration given by the Bishop of Galway, gives a good idea of his standing in diocesan circles and of his spiritual life.

Bishop's Last Tribute to a Great Galway Priest

His Lordship Most Rev. Dr. Browne, Bishop of Galway, presiding at the obsequies of the late Ven. Archdeacon M.D. Conroy, P.P., in Oughterard Church on Thursday, said that the late Archdeacon had rendered such great services to the Church in the diocese and was such a distinguished and venerable figure that his name will be long enshrined in the memory of all and will occupy a high place in the history of the diocese.

He had been endowed by nature with many great qualities but outstanding among these were his energy and zeal. He was indefatigable in the discharge of his priestly duties. In every parish in which he ministered he left an abiding memorial not merely in the memories of the people but in the work which he planned with vision, undertook with courage and carried through with determination.

So from his first curacy in Carraroe until he laid down his tired frame back home again in his beloved Connemara, his record was one of the building or

repair of churches, schools or presbyteries. Some might say that these temporal means were of secondary importance but they were indispensable means for the moral and religious progress of the people. As man is made of body and soul and the soul acts through the body and needs it, so the Church needs these temporal means and without them her spiritual and civilising mission was hampered. Every one of these churches and schools meant a step forward in the upward march of our people from the shackles of the penal days into the rightful inheritance of a free Catholic people.

Stand during Evictions

Continuing, His Lordship said that the late Archdeacon Conroy showed the qualities of energy, vision and zeal from his early years and under the greatest difficulties in Lettermullen. He could be judged by the beautiful church in Spiddal which marked a new epoch in Irish architecture; by his work in Lisdoonvarna and the spacious enlargement of the church in Oughterard.

The late Archdeacon, said the Bishop, was a man of austere and stern views in what concerned the interests of religion and morality. He would not temporise or compromise, but preached the law of God without fear or favour. Yet no man was more devoted to the interests of his people and more anxious for their social and economic improvement. He showed that by the stand he took during the evictions in Carraroe; by his spirited support of the national leaders during the land struggle, and by the great part he took in the founding of the Lisdoonvarna Improvement Trust which was the only practical means for developing the potentialities of that great Irish Spa.

Heroic Work

But, continued Most Rev. Dr. Browne, no priest of the diocese will ever forget the heroic work he did in bringing peace to the sadly misguided and disturbed parish of Killanin. His loyalty, firmness and courage saved a dangerous situation but it meant for Archdeacon Conroy many years of the most difficult and distressing work that could fall to the lot of any priest. For him it was the call of duty, and no inconvenience or trial could prevent him answering the call of the Master's work regardless of the cost. For he was above all a man of strong faith, a faith as strong as the granite of the hills that he loved. He lived in the presence of his Master and he had a most filial devotion to Our Blessed Lady. He loved to recall that he was ordained on Rosary Sunday, and it was no mere coincidence that he died within the octave of the Assumption.

Concluding, his Lordship prayed the Blessed Mother of God might present

the soul of the late Archdeacon before the throne of her Divine Son to receive the reward of the faithful servant. On behalf of the diocese he offered sympathy to the relatives whose sorrow, he said, was not greater than that of the priests who felt the loss of a venerable and priestly colleague. He asked the faithful to remember the late Archdeacon in their prayers, especially that prayer upon which he preached so often, the Family Rosary.

Mark Conroy was, in short, a fine character. I admire him particularly for his strong social commitment to helping people in difficulties. The man I would have liked to know also had a deep sense of the uniqueness of Connemara and an abiding curiosity about its past. For example, in 1932, on the occasion of the rededication of the Oughterard church, he took the opportunity to look back over the history of the parish and the region. In the very last years of his life, we find him writing as follows about the parish where, at the age of twenty-five, he held his first curacy:

'Lettermullen is a group of five islands and very interesting – situated far out into the ocean in view of St. MacDara's Island and Skirda Mor and Hy Brasil where the "old sea" has made the three miles erosion on our Irish coast and many incursions into our Western seaboard forming killeries, creeks, etc. some of which during a great spring ebb are seen to have oyster beds as well as the remains of bog oak. On a stormy day the surf is blown over Golain Head for a mile or more and is felt and tasted on the face and lips.' I am sure that in the relative calm of Oughterard he remembered his early days in coastal Connemara with great affection.

Jane Conroy, daughter of the late Michael and Joan Conroy of Garafin, Ros Muc, Co. Galway, is a lecturer in the French Department, NUI Galway. She graduated in that College, and subsequently did her Doctorate in Paris IV (Sorbonne). She specialises in intercultural dimensions of French literature from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, and is the author of one book and a number of articles in this area. She is currently working on material produced by French-speaking travellers to Ireland.

THE END OF AN ERA ON CLARE ISLAND

Ellen O'Malley Dunlop

Clare Island is one of the largest islands in Clew Bay, which boasts 365 islands, 'an island for each day of the year' according to the locals. When driving into Westport town en route to Clare Island, the sight of the Holy Mountain, Croagh Patrick, which presents itself on the left of the horizon, and Clare Island sphinx-like and jutting up from the sea, on the right of the horizon, is transporting. The view of these two ancient symbols never fails to touch the soul: Croagh Patrick with its worn paths from thousands of years of pilgrims climbing its summit to repent and seek forgiveness, to celebrate and give thanks. Its mood ranging from mystical to menacing and all the tones in between and Clare Island magical, timeless and with its own pervasive sense of permanence.

To get to Clare Island one has to go to Roonagh pier about six miles from Louisburgh and take a boat to cross the often-treacherous five-mile sea journey to the island. On calm beautiful days with the dolphins accompanying the boat and performing for the traveller, it can be difficult to imagine the rough sea days and vice versa. Whatever the weather, on reaching the island one is immediately struck by the calm of the place and the comforting presence of Knockmore, the 1600 foot mountain to the north west which has featured in many of the paintings of Tony O'Malley!

Clare Island was one of the ancestral homes of the illustrious sixteenth-century ancestor of the O'Malleys, Grace O'Malley, the Pirate Queen. She was a remarkable woman, not only for her own time but for any time. It is reputed that she is buried on the island and that her remains are interred in the thirteenth-century ruined Cistercian Abbey. Like many of our historical characters Grace O'Malley, through the stories passed on mainly via the oral tradition (her life and times were not recorded in the Annals of the Four Masters but this was redressed by Anne Chambers²) has taken on a mythological form and there are those who believe she was a mythical and not a historical person. There were lots of reasons why Grace O'Malley chose Clare Island as one of her homes; among them had to be its physical beauty, its remoteness, its antiquity and its tranquillity, to name but a few of its many qualities.

In more recent times Robert Lloyd Praeger, the renowned naturalist, was to acknowledge the rich sources of beauty, tradition and enquiry that are part of

Clare Island. He conducted a survey of all forms of life on Clare Island from plant to human life, in the early twentieth century. The Royal Irish Academy undertook a new survey in the 1990s, which was instigated by the good work of the Centre for Island Studies founded by Ciara Cullen and Peter Gill. The first survey of Clare Island can be viewed as a microcosm of life on the mainland. It is unique in that the studies looked at almost every angle of life on the



Clare Island Castle.

island. The later survey is in the process of being published but Praeger's Survey called 'A biological Survey of Clare Island County Mayo Ireland and of the adjoining district' was published between 1911 and 1915 in the *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* and comprised an impressive 67 reports.³ Praeger found Clare Island an irresistible object of study, an opportunity to observe his subject, as the scientist sees his subject, under the microscope.

The Congested Districts Board bought the island from the last landlord in 1895. The Board first experimented with striping (re-apportioning the island from the rundale system of farming into new forms separated by walls and fencing) the land on Clare Island before it was implemented on the mainland, and the islanders became landowners buying the newly striped and fenced holdings from the Board.

During World War II Clare Island had its own unique experiences of the awful consequences of war. There were many bodies washed ashore, victims of sea warfare. These bodies were identified and sent back to their families to be buried. One man, a young soldier whose name was Private Tweed, had no family to claim him and it was decided that he should be buried on the island. The priest at the time refused to bury him inside the consecrated graveyard ground, because he was not a Catholic. Instead he was buried outside the walls much to the annoyance of many islanders who refused to go to Moss for the duration of that priest's time on the island. In 2000 the local priest Fr. Ned Crosby, with the help of an island man Myles Ruddy, quietly took down stone by stone the old wall of the graveyard and extended the walls to include Private Tweed's grave. The

islanders erected a tombstone to commemorate him.

This priest was a man who seemed to have touched everyone on the island from the very old to the very young, from the very religious to the very sceptical. My first experience of his homilies, which he delivered not from the altar but from the body of the church, was an evening when I slipped unnoticed, or so I thought, into the first vacant seat, as I was late. I was taken aback by the quiet 'you're welcome' from the man who then continued with his homily. The attention this man commanded in that small Church tenderly decorated and candlelit by the islanders was remarkable. His passion seemed gentle and fierce at the same time. He told stories to illustrate his points and you knew he was always well prepared. That night, to demonstrate a point from the Gospel reading about the dangers of holding on to possessions, he, holding firmly on to one of the seats in the church said: 'as long as I hold onto this seat I am as much a prisoner of this seat as it is of me, I never missed a homily after that and I was never disappointed.

I watched in amazement at the ways this man prepared the people to administer to themselves and to each other when he was gone. He instilled in everyone a sense of the importance of ritual during the short two years he spent on the island. He acted as a bridge between the ancient and the Christian worlds that are so evident on Clare island, by reconnecting and resurrecting the old well rituals and the pilgrimages to the holy island of Caher, among many other events and commemorations.

In 2002 Fr. Ned Crosby left Clare Island and has not and will not be replaced. Nowadays a priest comes once a week, weather permitting, to say Mass and administer the Sacraments, while on other occasions the islanders themselves conduct the rituals, so well prepared by Fr. Ned. Clare Island allowed itself to be studied under the microscope of Robert L. Praeger and striped by the Congested Districts Board before it was applied on the mainland. Are we witnessing a template in relation to the Spiritual welfare of the people of Clare Island, which will come to pass on the mainland of Ireland? Is the end of an era on Clare Island heralding the beginning of an era on the mainland?

Footnotes

1. O'Malley, Tony, recently deceased and renowned Irish Artist
2. Chambers, Anne, *Granuaile: The Life and Times of Grace O'Malley* (First edition 1979).
3. Praeger R.L. *Clare Island Survey* General Summary, Section 68, pp. 1-15 (April 1915).

Ellen O'Malley Dunlop, daughter of Donal O'Malley, Rathdowney, Co. Laois, and granddaughter of John O'Malley, Clare Island, Co. Mayo, was elected Clan Chieftain in 1993. A qualified Primary School Teacher, she later trained as a Psychotherapist and Group Analyst. Ellen now lives and works in Dublin with her husband Sandy and four sons. She has recently completed her studies for an M.Litt. Degree in Irish Folklore at NUI Dublin. Ellen and Sandy have organised a Bard Summer School in Clare Island for the last ten years,

A VOYAGE AROUND MY FATHER

Máire Finnegan

My fondest memory of my father in his later years is of him sitting by the window, painstakingly thumbing through his cherished copy of *Roget's Thesaurus*. He never gave up until he found the solution to that last remaining crossword clue! His diligence, patience and perseverance never ceased to amaze me but of course these qualities epitomised his approach to all challenges presented throughout his long life. 'Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well' was his motto.

Séamus O'Malley was born on a farm in Drumhill in 1903, the third eldest of eleven children. The family later moved to Lavally and he attended the Christian Brothers Primary and Secondary schools in the local town of Ballinrobe. Having passed the scholarship entrance exam to St. Patrick's Training College in Drumcondra, he qualified as a teacher and took up his first teaching post in Kildare where he remained for four years. It was with the Lilywhites that he had his first football outing at senior level. However, the West beckoned and he returned, first to Carna and then to his beloved Mayo where he settled in Claremorris and taught successively in Shanvaughera, Meelickmore, Seefin and Coillmore National schools. He was highly regarded as a dedicated, enlightened and conscientious teacher. Mar bhall de Chonradh na Gaeilge bhí an teanga go líofa aige agus chothaigh sé grá don Gaeilge i mease na ndaltaí. His legacy was acknowledged by the many past pupils who attended his funeral.

Though he was the first of his family to enjoy third level education, he never forgot his farming background. As a child he was expected to help with farming chores during school holidays and was very much aware of the necessity of the meitheal for seasonal farming events like haymaking and turf saving. The concept of co-operation and of serving the wider community was the guiding principle which informed his adult life. This was best exemplified by his sterling and unbroken service for sixty-four years as secretary to the St. Vincent de Paul Society. He rarely missed the Monday night meeting and many poor and elderly residents had occasion to welcome his regular visits. His commitment was fuelled by a deep religious faith and the family was justly proud when in 1992 he was presented with the Benemerenti Medal for outstanding service to the Church and related activities.

Other local organisations also received the benefit of his wisdom and sound judgement. A lifetime member of Claremorris Golf Club, he was involved in

early negotiations with Lord Oranmore and Browne for the acquisition of land for the club. He was secretary for over forty years and also served terms as Captain and President. His routine after his retirement from teaching was a daily round of golf with friends, after morning mass. Much to the alarm of his family he insisted on driving to the Golf Club himself even in his late nineties! He was also a trustee of the Town Hall Redevelopment Committee and for many years helped out with the weekly Bingo fund-raising sessions. As he grew older, my mother constantly worried about him walking home alone with the night's takings!

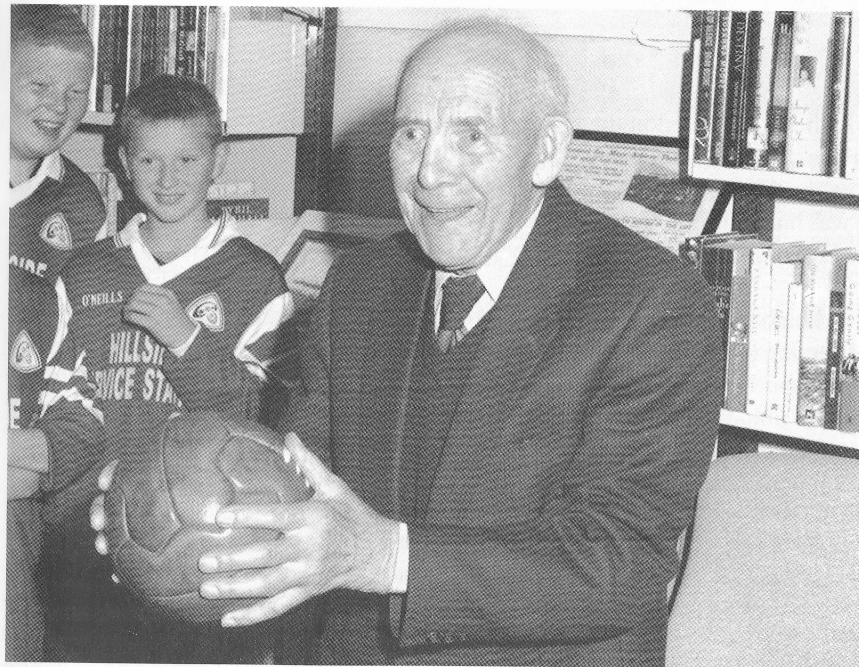
Aside from community involvement, there was plenty of time to indulge his great passion for fishing and gardening. Many happy hours were spent on Lough Mask with his lifelong friend, John Colleran, their patience occasionally rewarded by landing that elusive brown trout! Summer holidays in Enniscrone were spent golfing and fishing. His garden was his pride and joy and he was especially proud of his organically grown vegetables and the blackcurrant and gooseberry bushes which provided enough jam for the year. At Dad's funeral Mass, the celebrant, Fr. Cunnane, recounted a lovely story about the time he called unexpectedly to the family home and became very worried about Dad's mental capacity when he found him in the garden, crushing eggshells underfoot! However, Dad reassured him by explaining that egg-shells were cheap and effective composting material. Ecologically aware, nothing was ever wasted and he was environmentally friendly long before it became the fashion.

But, of course, it was as the captain who led the Mayo senior football team to their first ever All-Ireland Championship success in 1936 that he is best remembered. He had previously won National League and Connacht Championship medals with the County and actually came out of retirement to play in 1936. He often related the story of travelling through the night with the Sam McGuire Cup as he had to teach the morning following the glorious victory. A fair in Claremorris delayed the taxi so he only had time to snatch a quick breakfast before heading off to school in Meelickmore with Sam on the back of his bicycle. The pupils were thrilled to have their photograph taken with the cup. After retiring from play, he became very active in promoting the interests of the GAA. Indeed he, uniquely, was already secretary of the Mayo County Board at the time of the All-Ireland and subsequently held every office in the South Mayo Board and in his local Claremorris club, working tirelessly and selflessly to foster the enthusiasm of young players. To show its appreciation of his lifelong commitment, the GAA named the new stand erected in the Claremorris pitch in 1999 after him. Speaking at the opening, the then President of the GAA, Joe McDonagh, paid this tribute 'In Séamus O'Malley, Claremorris has one of the GAA's greatest members of all time and a man that every county in Ireland would be proud of and like to have.' Dad's phenomenal memory made him an ideal

interviewee by local and national media and we are fortunate that his memories are recorded on tape and video.

Despite the accolades bestowed on him, he remained modest and unassuming, a devoted father and grandfather. He loved family gatherings, especially when they ended in a singsong when he was always ready to entertain the gathering with 'Queen of Connemara' or 'Cruacha Glas na hÉireann'. Proud of his family name, he and family members attended many of the early O'Malley clan rallies. A loving and loved husband for over sixty years he was supported in all his voluntary activities by my mother who cared for seven children as well as teaching full-time. He reciprocated her generosity by his gentle, tender caring of her when her health began to fail. A man of great dignity, moral integrity and compassion, he enriched all our lives and the lives of all who knew him. Gura móide teaghlach Dé a anam uasal!

Máire Finnegan was educated in Coláiste Mhuire, Tuar Mhic Éadaigh, and subsequently taught there after graduating from U.C.G.. Having lived in England for eleven years, where their three children Emer, Nuala and Niall were born, she and her husband, Professor Patrick Finnegan, now reside in Galway.



Séamus O'Malley at the presentation of the ball used in the 1936 All-Ireland Final.
(Photo courtesy Michael Donnelly)

THE O'FLAHERTY CASTLE OF BUNOWEN

Michael Gibbons

The glacially-scoured landscape of southwest Connemara is dominated by the dramatically-sited Hill of Doon, the remains of a volcanic plug over sixty million years old. The hill is reputed to have been one of the Fairy Seats of Connemara and was once crowned with an ancient Dún according to Roderic O'Flaherty, the seventeenth-century Connemara historian. The fort or Dún is long gone for no trace of it survives on the ground. The area and vicinity of Doon Hill have been at the centre of political, military and economic power for the best part of 1,500 years in this part of Connemara. The area around the hill is known as Bunabhainn (Bottom of the river) from a small stream that drains the surrounding lakes and bogs and forms the eastern boundary to the present townland of Bunowen More. It was here on the west bank of this stream at the point where it enters a sheltered inlet of the sea that the O' Flahertys built their most important castle in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century.

The most obvious man-made feature which is visible today is the ruin of the eighteenth-nineteenth century Bunowen Castle which is sited atop a drumlin ridge which lies sheltered in the lee of the hill of Doon. This castellated mansion was originally built by the Geoghegans in the mid-seventeenth century. They were a wealthy Catholic family transplanted from Castletown, Co. Westmeath in 1656. It was built with stone robbed from its medieval predecessor. The medieval castle and its context are the primary focus of this article.

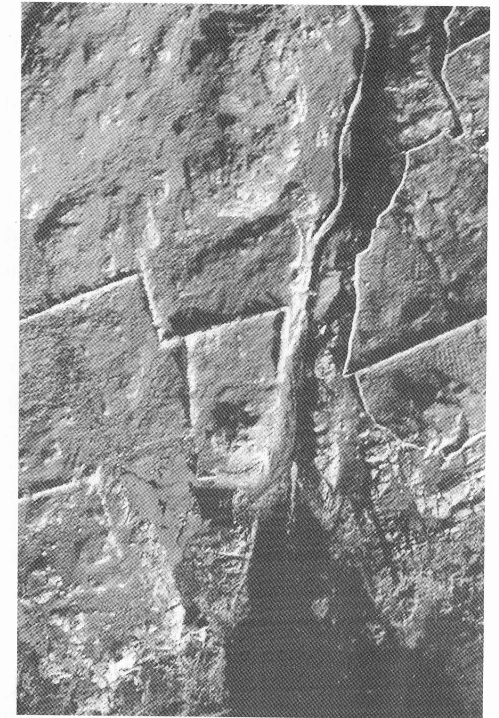
The rulers of Bunowen down through the ages saw the strategic importance of the area in terms of its maritime value. To own Bunowen meant having the ability to control and to exploit coastal maritime trade and fishing from the Aran Islands in the south-east to Ceann Léime (Slyne Head) in the west. The strategic requirement to dominate these valuable waters was one of the reasons why the O'Flahertys originally chose to build one of their castles here.

Bunowen was the major castle of the western branch of the O'Flahertys. They had other castles at Doon, at Streamstown Bay and on an island in Ballynahinch Lake. In both these cases they seem to have reused the pre-existing sites. Their control castle at Renvyle Point dominated the northern waters of Connemara in opposition to their sometimes enemies, the O'Malleys of south Mayo.

The O'Flaherty Lordship's ability to operate was historically dependent on its ability to deploy its naval resources on lake or sea. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries the O'Flahertys were Lords of Lough Corrib and inner Galway Bay, operating from their base at Bun Gaillimhe at the mouth of the Corrib River located within the medieval core of old Galway. In the thirteenth century they were pushed westward and forced off the fertile lands east of Lough Corrib, and off the lake itself and inner Galway Bay by more powerful sources, namely the O'Connor Kings of Connacht and invading Norman barons, the Burkes. The O'Flahertys retreated westward into Iar-Chonnacht which they were to dominate for the next four centuries.

It is not known precisely when the O'Flahertys first came to Bunowen. The ousting of the then traditional chiefs of Connemara, the Ó Cadhla (the Keeleys), would have been a bloody affair. Like other Gaelic lords elsewhere in the country the O'Flaherty seats of power are fairly elusive during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. They may have reused the pre-existing Dún on the summit of Doon Hill before moving downhill eastward to construct the fortified tower house at Bunowen.

The O'Flahertys were divided into two main branches. The principal branch was based close to the Corrib at Aughnanure Castle, due east of the modern village of Oughterard. With their greater proximity to English power based in Galway city, they were the first of the O'Flahertys the government attempted to rein in as part of their feudalisation policy of surrender and re-grant. Buying their allegiance and granting them control of Iar-Chonnacht started an internal civil war between the various O'Flaherty branches. The western branch refused to

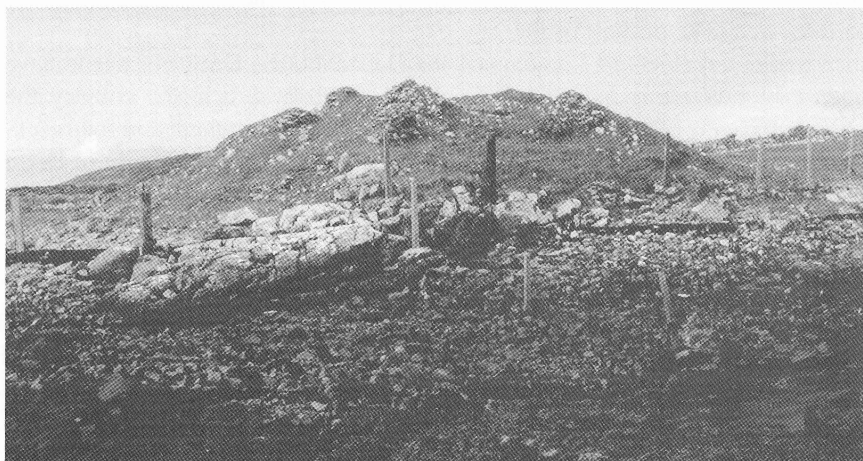


A vertical aerial view of Bunowen Castle on the west side of the stream adjoining coeval field system to west and canalised stream and possible mill site on east side. The castle is visible as an L-shaped mound of collapse in the southeast corner of a sub-rectangular bawn of unequal size. (Photo: Michael Gibbons)

participate in this policy. They continued to appoint the most capable and warlike to lead the family; the most famous of them was Donal an Chogaidh (of the war) who owned Ballynahinch, Bunowen and possibly Hen's Castle or Castlekirke on Lough Corrib. He married Gráinne Ní Mháille and they had three children, Owen, Murchadh na Maor (of the stewards) and Margaret.

The marriage of Donal and Gráinne linked the two most powerful seafaring families of Connacht. Between them the O'Malleys and the O'Flahertys controlled much of the trading, raiding and wrecking along the Atlantic coast of Connacht. Donal, nicknamed an Coileach (Cock) was killed during fighting with the now gaelicised Joyces of Maam Valley over control of the strategically-placed Norman castle, Castlekirke, on upper Lough Corrib. Despite this, Gráinne continued to successfully defend the castle. Little is heard from the Western O'Flahertys until 1584 when Murchadh na dTua (of the battle axes) O'Flaherty from Fuaidh Castle (which was on the bridge at Oughterard and is no longer extant), recently installed by the English, at Aughnanure, made an unsuccessful raid in Connemara in an attempt to seize Ballynahinch Castle. Despite his lack of success, he was knighted the following year when he signed up to the Composition of Connacht, which involved the surrender of tribal lands to the Crown to be re-granted as heritable land under Feudal law.

The failure of the Western O'Flahertys, Joyces and Burkes of Mayo to sign up to the Composition of Connacht led to direct confrontation with the English forces; rebellion and brutal suppression followed. A major raid into Connemara in 1586 was led by John Bingham, brother of the ruthless Lord President of Connacht, Richard Bingham. The O'Flahertys withdrew with much of their wealth



Stump of fifteenth-century Bunowen Castle viewed from the east. (Photo: Michael Gibbons)



Southwest corner of fifteenth-century bawn of Bunowen Castle with eighteenth-century castle in background. (Photo: Michael Gibbons)

– thousands of cattle, sheep and horses – deep into Connemara and out onto the tidal island of Omev. This incursion led to the death of Owen O'Flaherty, first-born son of Donal and Gráinne, and the elderly leader of the O'Tooles who kept a house of hospitality (Biatach) on the island.

The raid is described by his mother:

her first husband was called Donell-I-Choggy O'Flaherty, who during his life was chieftain of the Barony of Ballenehensy containing, 24 quarters of land; that she had two sons by her said first husband; the eldest called Owen O'Flaherty who married Katherine Bourke, daughter of Edmond Bourke of Castle Barry (Castlebar) and had a son named Donel O'Flaherty now (1593) living; that the said Owen O'Flaherty all his lifetime remained a true subject of Her Majesty until July, 1586, at which time the Bourkes of McWilliam's Country (i.e. the Mayo Bourkes) and the sept of the Joyces began to rebel; that said Owen according to Sir Richard Bingham's special direction did withdraw himself and his followers with all their goods and cattle into a strong island [Omev Island] that 500 soldiers under the leading of Captain John Bingham came to the mainland right against the said island calling for victuals; whereupon the said Owen came forth with a number of boats and ferried all the soldiers into the island where they were entertained with the best cheer they had; that that night the said Owen with eighteen of his chief men were apprehended and tied by the soldiers who drew out of the island 4,000 cows, 500 stud mares, and 1,000 sheep, leaving the remainder of the poor men all naked: that they came with the cattle and prisoners to Ballyneehensy where Captain John Bingham awaited them: that the next night, a false alarm being raised in the camp, the said Owen being then fast bound in the cabin of Captain Grene O'Mulloy was cruelly murdered having twelve deadly wounds, and in that miserable sort ended his unfortunate days.

Murchadh na Maor (of the Stewards) younger brother of Owen, now took over as leader of the Western Branch of the O'Flahertys and had to tread very carefully in the face of growing English power in the Provinces. Having seen his brother Owen killed so ruthlessly, he was determined not to give the English any excuses to depose him. In the Autumn of 1588 a number of Spanish Armada ships were wrecked on the coast of Mayo and Connemara. The O'Flaherty and O'Malley adopted a survival strategy which involved killing or handing over to the Crown all the Spaniards that came ashore from these wrecks; to assist the Spaniards was to put their own survival at risk, while keeping Bingham at bay was key to their ongoing survival.

At least two or possibly three Spanish Armada ships were wrecked in the autumn of 1588 on the shores of Connemara. Almost all the men were drowned while several hundred struggled ashore to an uncertain fate. At Mace Head, west of Carna, at a place since known as *Duirling na Spáinneach* where the *Conception Delcano* was wrecked. Many are said to have been killed on the shore by *Tadhg na Buile* of Ard Castle. Others who survived the wreck of the *Falco Blanco Mediano* in Ballynakill Bay were initially protected by the O'Flahertys of Renvyle. The O'Flahertys however soon succumbed to English pressure and marched them to their deaths in Galway city. Only two were known to have survived from the Falcon Blanco Mediana, the noblemen Don Luis de Cordoba and his nephew, who were later ransomed. A persistent tradition current from the Ballyconneely area is of another Armada ship wrecked on wild rocks one and a half miles west of Bunowen, known locally as *Carraig na gCapall* (from horses that came ashore). Despite the general butchery meted out it is clear that not all the Spaniards were betrayed. The O'Flahertys managed to rescue twenty Spanish troops which were used in raids by their eastern cousin, Sir Murrough O'Flaherty, in south Mayo in support of the Burkes in 1589.

Despite keeping a low profile throughout 1590 Murchadh na Maor refused to support Airt O'Malley, his cousin, in ferrying troops in support of the English from Galway to Sligo in an attempt to crush the O'Donnell rebellion in Ulster. He joined in the rebellion and is said to have sailed from Bunowen with 600 men to join with the forces of O'Neill and O'Donnell who were attempting to link up with Spanish forces in Kinsale. Following defeat at Kinsale he returned to Bunowen where he lived out his days until dying in 1626, he was buried in Galway City. We have a rare glimpse of the O'Flaherty maritime world from an Inquisition taken in Galway in the year 1607:

Morogh na Moyre O'Flaherty is seized of the castles of Bunowen, Ballinahinch, and Renvyle: that Donell na Cogge (O'Flaherty) father of the said Morogh, and whose heir he is, was at the time he died seized of several chief rents in the Barony of Ballinahinch; that O'Flaherty held the fines and customs following, in and through the whole barony

of Ballinahinch, namely - First, that whenever anyone was robbed of a cow, the thief shall pay to the said O'Flaherty seven cows for every cow so stolen; that whenever O'Flaherty went to the General Sessions the inhabitants used to present him with a butt of sack. Moreover, that he was entitled to have yearly out of every quarter of land within the said Barony certain measures of meal called 'Sruans' in Irish, together with a sufficient quantity of butter. Further, that it was customary whenever anyone took any wreck out of the sea, or ambergreese [i.e. spermaceti - see Appendix A] without notice thereof given to O'Flaherty or his sergeants, the person so doing shall pay a fine of seven cows to O'Flaherty: And whenever O'Flaherty gave any of his daughters in marriage he was accustomed to receive one barren two-year-old cow out of every inhabited quarter within the aforesaid barony.

He was replaced by his son Murchadh na Mart (of the Beeves). In 1637 Thomas Wentworth, Lord Deputy of Ireland, is reported to have paid a visit to Bunowen Castle - a dual purpose visit, gathering information on the strength of the O'Flahertys and encouraging them in their loyalty to the Crown. Wentworth was received with all the rude profusions of Irish hospitality. Murchadh was subsequently knighted by him. This loyalty to the Crown was short-lived. During the Great Rebellion of 1641 Murchadh's galleys at Bunowen were used to transport hundreds of Kerne (Irish footsoldiers) in support of his younger brother Edmond, who was besieging Galway city. Edmond later sailed to Aran probably into the medieval harbour of Killeany and from there to the coast of Clare where he sacked the castle of Trumra and killed its owner, Peter Ward, and an Englishman. With the failure of the rebellion, the O'Flaherty estates were confiscated. Bunowen castle was captured and burnt in 1653. Edmond fled to Connemara but was



Watergate and Doon Hill in background. (Photo: Michael Gibbons)

subsequently captured by the English, hiding out in a cave on the side of Tully Mountain. He was later executed for the killing of Peter Ward.

His brother, Sir Murchadh, was to survive, retiring to Aran where he died in 1666. He was buried in the ancient and prestigious burial ground of Teaghlach Éinne. However a son of Edmond was able to lease some ancestral lands in Renvyle that were held by the Blakes who were absentee landlords. His son was known as Edmond Láidir, who died in poverty in 1749. Edmond's descendants continued to live in Renvyle as middlemen to the Blakes until the early nineteenth century when they were dispossessed yet again and disappeared from history. Their demise finally ended the centuries-old domination of west Connemara by the O'Flahertys.

Castle Description

The castle is built on what is now a remote spot on the west bank of a small stream at the point where it enters a long narrow inlet. Its location is typical of the many O'Flaherty towerhouses built by these sea lords, i.e., within striking distance of deep water but protected by a formidable barrier of dangerous reefs, rocks and islets. The channel is sheltered by a wall of surrounding rocks and their shallow-draught galleys would have been able to ride safely at anchor except perhaps in a southerly gale.

Even today in its broken-down state, the location of the castle is very impressive, commanding huge views southeast to Aran and westwards to the Hill of Doon and a myriad of smaller offshore islands and rocks. It originally would have stood four stories high and like Ard Castle, Leitir Mealláin, and Rockfleet Castles in Mayo, the castle would have had its base in the actual tide.

It is succinctly described by Roderic O'Flaherty in his *Description of Iar-Connaught*, written A.D. 1684:

Three miles [to the westward] of Irrosbeg is the castle and manor of Bunowen in Irrosmore (Errismore). Westward of the castle is Knock-a-duin hill [Doon Hill] the third land-mark descried by such as sail from the main. On the east side of the hill is a harbour for shipping, and the parish church just by, at the hill's foot. There is an old fortress (Dún) on the top of the hill, which gives name to [the locality of] Balyndown (Ballindoon), Ballindoon haven, Ballindoon parish. St. Flannan, first Bishop of Killaloe A.D. 1640, is patron of this parish; and therein his festival day is kept the 18th December. On the west side of the hill (Doon hill) is a well in memory of the seven daughters.

The castle today lies in ruins within a trapezoidal bawn measuring a maximum of 51m N/S by 37m E/W narrowing to 25.5m along its southern seaward end. The castle survives today as a 10 by 12m mound up to 3m in height in the south

east corner of the bawn. Much of the bawn on the seaward side has been swept away by the tide with only foundation courses visible in places. The northern half of the bawn is relatively well preserved and stands up to 3m in height where it abuts the adjoining stream in the north-eastern sector. The majority of the Bawn stands less than 1.5m high and 1.4m in thickness. There are traces of at least one rectangular building abutting the northern wall of the bawn and an opening in the eastern wall does appear to represent the remains of an opening for a watergate which would have allowed access for people arriving by sea. The stream on which it stands has in part been canalized where it abuts the bawn in order to facilitate a possible mill. The mill foundation may lie beneath an adjoining mound on the eastern side of the stream. The edge of the stream has been further altered to create a number of small indentations, possibly moorings for row boats.



Line of bawn wall on west side with sheltered inlet in background. (Photo: Michael Gibbons)

The castle was part of a broader late medieval landscape that was centred around the hill of Doon. To the west of the castle there survives the remains of a medieval field system rectilinear in plan, traces of an intertidal roadway, which runs westward towards Doon Hill, a Holy Well, Tobar na Seacht nÍnfon on the western side of Doon Hill (which is still visited) and the site of the medieval parish church of Ballindoon, the church in which Dónal and Gráinne almost certainly were married. The church lay at the north-eastern edge of Doon and is no longer extant. The last vestiges of it were described by John O'Dovovan in 1839. At that stage only the south side wall remained, about 7 feet high and 42 feet long. This was the Dún on the hill above, robbed out to provide stone for the later eighteenth-century Geoghegan mansion, walled garden and mortuary chapel of the Geoghegans. In the late eighteenth century the Geoghegans built a folly erected to commemorate the granting of free trade in 1780 and in the early nineteenth century a signal tower was built there, possibly by the Blakes, who

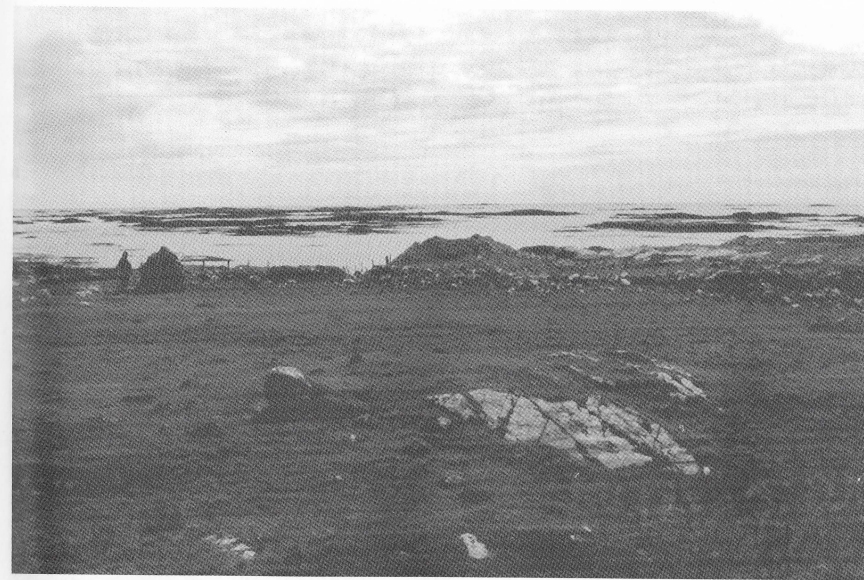
took over the estate when the Geoghegans went bankrupt in the late 1830s. At the base of the hill the remains of a stone jetty can be seen at low tide collaborating O'Flaherty's account that there is a harbour for shipping on the east side of Doon Hill.

In 1656, Art Geoghegan of Castletown, Co Westmeath, moved into the burnt-out ruins of Bunowen Castle. They occupied the castle for the next 100 years. He had been a major Catholic landowner, was transferred to Connemara as part of the Government's notorious policy of 'To Hell or to Connaught'. In return for their fertile acres in Leinster they received 900 acres of mainly bog and rock, except for the fertile nugget of land around Doon Hill at Bunowen and its surrounding townlands. The Geoghegans would appear to have lived at the castle until the middle of the eighteenth century when they moved westward on to the present magnificent setting when the present Bunowen castle was completed. It was built as a strong house in 1756 by Art Geoghegan's grandson Richard (1716 - 1800). He was the first of the family to conform to the Protestant faith as did many others of the landed families in Connemara and elsewhere for social, political and economic reasons at this time, most famously the Martins and the D'Arcys.

Appendix A. The reference to Ambergris is important as it was an incredibly valuable product of the sea derived from the gut of the sperm whale and was regularly washed up on the Atlantic shores of Europe. It is a black, semiviscous and foul-smelling liquid while in the gut of the whale, but on exposure to sunlight,



Canalized stream and possible mill site. (Photo: Michael Gibbons)



View of castle mound from the north. (Photo: Michael Gibbons)

it hardens to an aromatic, marbled, greyish, waxy substance with the squid beaks still embedded and was worth its weight in gold. It was traded southwards to Seville and onwards to the spice markets of Seville, Cairo and Baghdad, and onwards to the Orient where it was used as a fixative in perfume and in medicine, and as an aphrodisiac and a spice for food and wine. It was still being collected on the coasts of Connemara, according to Roderic O'Flaherty in the late seventeenth century. It also gives us an insight into the far-flung trading contacts of the O'Flaherty world.

It is not permitted to visit either the original or the later castle without advance permission from Sheila Mac Donagh, Bunabhainn. It is possible however, to view the original castle from a point on the shore to the east of the castle that involves a short 50 metre walk along the shore from the end of a small road. There is space to park a number of cars here.

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Michael Gibbons, a native of Clifden, Co. Galway, is one of Ireland's leading field archaeologists, a writer, a broadcaster and mountaineer. A member of the Archaeological Committee of the Heritage Council of Ireland, he is also a former director of both a local and national archaeological survey programmes. He is responsible for re-evaluating the archaeological heritage of Connemara and the Aran Islands.



O'Malley Clan, Chicago at St. Patrick's Day Parade, 1989.

FATHER JAMES O'MALLEY

Revd Vincent Kelly

One of the clerical heroes of the Famine period in Western lore is the subject of this article. His name is Father James O'Malley. James Berry has referred to him in his book *Tales of the West of Ireland*. He noted that this priest was descended from a clan which was rated to be the wealthiest and most eloquent stock who ever figured west of Croagh Patrick.¹

Nevertheless, there has been a dearth of information in local history with regard to this family of O'Malleys from Cahir, a village near Louisburgh, Co. Mayo. The church records of the parish of Kilgeever, to which I had access, revealed such an abundance of entries in the church registers of marriages and births in the name of O'Malley, that it is difficult to trace one clan. I must therefore write what I know from history and tradition, and pass on details of information which the next generation may build upon.

Father James was born in Cahir, the son of 'Neddy' O'Malley and Bridget Prendergast of Accony. They had a family of three boys and two girls. Apart from Fr. James, there were Edward and Tom; the two daughters being Máire and Nora. A great-grandson of Tom, named James, was ordained in 1923 and became Bishop of Achonry. Edward married and lived in Cahir. He had two sons and a daughter, Bridget, who married Simon O'Reilly of Shraugh. These were the parents of my mother, Kathleen Kelly (nee O'Reilly).

Returning to Fr. James, I discovered that there was no record in the diocesan archives regarding the date of his birth or that of his Ordination. We do know he worked as an assistant priest in the parish of Began in 1828. In between that year and 1836, he seems to have returned to his native place. After that, he transferred to Moore, near Ballinasloe, where he remained until 1841. His next appointment, under Archbishop McHale, was Ballinrobe.

It was here he made many friends who were kind to him, especially during the desperate years of the Great Famine. Here it was he helped three young students attending the local 'hedge school'. One named Tighe later became an important businessman in Ballinrobe. The second student belonged to a family called Gibbons. They were evicted from their home in Tourmakeady about 1829 and emigrated to America, returning around 1835 and settling in Ballinrobe. There they lived until 1852 – in a house occupied by a Mr. J.B. Staunton in the early part of the last century. The late Bishop Fergus, who was P.P. in Ballinrobe in the 1980s, confirmed these facts for me, and went on to say that this second student became the famous Cardinal Gibbons of New York. The third student, a boy with

the surname McCormack, grew up to be ordained and become the Administrator of Westport. It should be noted that Bishop Fergus was kinsman to Father O'Malley, and had gathered a lot of lore about him when serving as Administrator in Westport and then becoming P.P. in Ballinrobe in 1946.

The Famine devastated the population of Ballinrobe, as it did in all the other towns and villages of Co. Mayo. Poverty ensued with the decline of the potato crop. A traveller in that county in 1835, one John Killeen, reported that on his way 'to the mountain of Croagh Patrick, we passed some of the most miserable hovels – so bad that they resembled cattle sheds more than human habitations'.²

In order to alleviate the poverty, hunger and subsequent disease, structures were, built in Westport, Ballinrobe, and other sizeable towns, in order to house and feed an average of five thousand inmates. It appears from records in the large gothic workhouse where Fr. James ministered tirelessly to his flock, that about 70% died from fever. The courage, dignity, and faith of the people who endured the Famine is well-illustrated in the book *The Great Hunger* by Cecil Woodham-Smith.

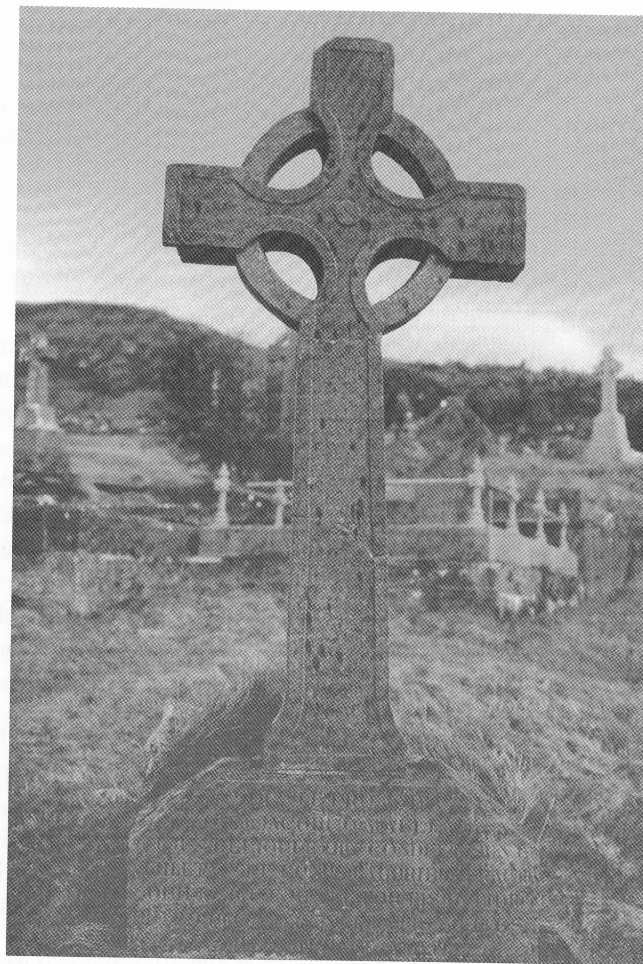
There were many instances of the Proselytisers attempting to win the hungry people over to their side. I read of a widow woman who had buried her husband after some of her family had gone to join the million who emigrated to the U.S.A. She was almost at death's door from the hunger. She went in the direction of the 'Soupers' who dispersed soup and bibles at their kitchens. On her journey there, she pulled her shawl over her head and entered her own Catholic church, where she knelt in prayer. 'Goodbye now, dear Lord,' were her parting words, 'until the praties grow again.'

The clergy and those who tried to win back the Catholic people were mostly successful, though some encounters proved more difficult. It happened that the Clerk of the church at Partry had been lured by the food kitchens there. When the congregation assembled for Mass on a certain Sunday, the Clerk refused to open the church. Fr. James, who was offering the Mass, handled this impasse prudently. The people then gained access to the church and received their Mass. Before Fr. James returned to Ballinrobe, the Clerk went on his knees before the priest and sought his pardon. This was forthcoming.

Fr. James endured many such stressful incidents. These finally affected his health, even though he remained firm in his faith. It has been recorded that some priests found the work so difficult – being weary night and day, anointing and burying hundreds of their parishioners who died from hunger and disease – that they accompanied those who fled the country to seek a new life abroad.

In 1849, Fr. James was given a country parish in Crossboyne, with a view to building up his health and spirit again. On leaving, his many friends who survived

the Famine presented him with a token of their affection for his pastoral work. He replied suitably, and thanked them for their courage and support. This farewell address was published by the local paper at the time. Bishop Fergus told me that he had seen a copy of the speech while doing some research in old paper files of 1849. One interesting subject which he referred to in his going-away speech concerned Archbishop John McHale. Fr. James claimed that it was he, and not the Archbishop, who was the author of the translation into Irish of Tom Moore's melodies. This clerical dispute must have been amicably settled later, when the Archbishop conceded to the truthful situation as stated by his curate.



Celtic Cross headstone of Fr. James O'Malley, Cahir, at Kilgeever Cemetery, Louisburgh. (Courtesy Fr. Vincent Kelly)

After about a year, Fr. James resigned from the Crossboyne parish and returned home to his native Cahir. There he was cared for by his devoted family and neighbours. Following a prolonged illness, and worn out in the service of his Lord, Fr. James passed on to his eternal reward in 1859. The P.P. in Louisburgh at the time was Father Michael Curley. He was the recipient of the sum of £25 in order to defray the funeral expenses. The donor was none other than Archbishop MacHale. Another generous donor was Fr. James's friend from the 'hedge school' days, who was now Bishop McCormack of Galway. He sent the cost of a suitable Celtic Cross to be placed over the grave of his boyhood friend. The cross had a Latin inscription which bore testimony to the firm faith of a notable priest of Famine times.

The grave of Fr. James is in the local Cemetery of Kilgeever, Louisburgh, Co. Mayo. It was pointed out to me last September by Seán O'Malley of Cahir. He also identified the many other graves of the Cahir clan in and around the Celtic Cross.

The Latin inscription on the base of the cross reads as follows:

*Ora pro anima Rev. Jacobi O'Malley
cujus reliquae hic condita sunt.
Athleta vera bonus laboribus tractis.
Obiit sicut vixit gratis, fortiter in fide.
die 29 Dec. 1859. aetatis 68 annos. [?]*

This translates as:

*Pray for the soul of Father James O'Malley,
whose remains are buried here.
He managed his labours as a truly great champion.
He died as he lived, strong in the faith,
on the 29th December 1859, aged 68 years.
May he rest in peace.³*

Footnotes

1. *Tales of the West of Ireland* by James Berry; ed. Gertrude M. Horgan, 1966.
2. *The Famine Decade, Contemporary Accounts 1841-1851*, ed. John Killen (Belfast, 1995).
3. This article has been reproduced from *An Choinneal*, No. 22 (2002) with kind permission.

Father Vincent Kelly, son of the late P.J. and Kathleen Kelly, was born in Louisburgh, but the family subsequently moved to Westport. Educated at St. Jarlath's College, Tuam, and later at U.C.D. and Holy Cross College, Clonliffe Dublin. After his Ordination he worked in parishes in Counties Dublin and Kildare. He was Parish Priest in Palmerstown, Co. Dublin, when he retired to Drumindoo, near Westport.

FATHER JAMES O'MALLEY AT LETTERBRECKAUN (Leiter Bhriocáin)

(From the typescript in the possession of the late P.J. Kelly and family, Westport. This story has been published in *James Berry, Tales of the West of Ireland*, edited by Gertrude M. Horgan (Dublin, 1966), pp 43-7. Although Professor Horgan has kept closely to the original version, it was felt that it might interest the readers of this journal to have this story available in its original form. Letterbreckaun is a deserted village beneath the northern base of the Maamturk mountains to the north of Lough Inagh. This story relates to a period about the year 1830 when it belonged to the parish of Ballinakill, Co. Galway. This priest and the Father James O'Malley of the preceding article were natives of Cahir, Louisburgh, and were undoubtedly kinsmen – Editor.)

The parish priest of Ballinakill and his two curates were holding a Confession Station in this now deserted village of Letterbreckaun (Leitir Bhriocáin). One of the curates was a young man of great strength and stature, who was reputed to be the cleverest young priest in the Archdiocese of Tuam, for, through his mother, he inherited natural talent, eloquence and fluency, both in Irish and English, for she belonged to the O'Malleys of Curragaun, a village quite near the mouth of the Killary, who were the wealthiest and most eloquent stock who have ever figured west of Reek. This young man was Father James O'Malley, of Cahir, a village just beside the little town of Louisburgh. When Archbishop MacHale was translating Homer and Moore's *Melodies*, one of his priests anonymously attacked him in the newspapers of that day, and the letters were as galling to the Archbishop as the letters of Junius were to those they were aimed at a generation before, but it failed him to find out who was the culprit. Then he called all the priests of the Archdiocese of Tuam, but it failed him to elicit who wrote them.

'Well now', said His Grace, 'the enquiry is over and there is only two men amongst you fit to write such able letters. No man ever wrote those letters but you, James O'Malley or Joe Burke there.' Father Joe Burke was then a young curate in Louisburgh. 'Well, Your Grace,' said Father Joe, 'it is I who wrote the letters; give me my exeat and I will leave your diocese.' So he received it, and went off to America. Why I have given this anecdote, is in order to show how clever he was, and the opinion His Grace had of him. Big Father James O'Malley of Cahir, as we used to call him is, I daresay, quite forgotten in his native parish, but not by us . . .

When the Station was over in the little village, the priests, as was usual in those days, remained for dinner, so Father James O'Malley determined to climb the tremendous Maam Turk mountain which overhung the little hamlet, and which bulges out above you as you climb. But yet it is easier climbed than Croagh Patrick, although it is far steeper. Nor is it conical or bare, for it is covered with heath and wild mountain grass, and generally cloud-capped. When Father James reached the summit, he saw an enormous granite rock on the very brow of the mountain, which overhung the little village. At its base, it rested on a bank of red clay, and was at least two or three hundred tons weight. Since the earliest ages, the sheep, goats and other animals used to shelter beside it in winter time, and in summer time they used to seek its shade. They were forever scraping and scratching themselves against the bank it rested on, and as time went on they wore away the clay, so they undermined two-thirds of its base, while the summer's heat caused the ground to shrink from it on the south side. Consequently Father James saw it was sure to fall with the first winter's rain or frost, and without ever thinking of the little village which lay beneath it, he determined to dislodge it for fun's sake, so he lay on his back, placed his feet against it, and with might and main he shoved. Like some prehistoric, monstrous, wild animal aroused from its lair, the dreadful rock sprang as if into life, and bounded down the side of the wild mountain, driving a torrent of stones and pebbles before it. As it sprang and collided against other rocks, the echoes rang out with the shock of the impart. All this time, Father James had forgotten the village, and he looked at the spot on which the rock stood and saw a bull's horn imbedded in the clay, which must have been shoved in through a rat or a weasel hole under the rock in olden times. So he took and examined it, and within it he found twenty-five gold guineas, so he took it with him.

All this time the villagers sat on a hillock, inhaling the sweet perfume which was wafted towards them from the Station house by the mild gentle zephyrs, for the air was redolent with the aroma of roasting and boiling, but they were soon aroused from their pleasant occupation, for they heard a dreadful crash high above them. Then they looked up and saw death crashing down towards them. With might and main they ran for dear life towards a foothill. On it came, springing and bounding, and gaining impetus as it descended, and soon, as if in a fury, it sprang into the doomed little village of rude stone cabins, and it took three of the houses with it into the deep swampy glen at the foot of the mountain. And then it sank forever.

When Father James descended he found the village in ruins, and the natives lamenting. The wild sad Irish wail of the homeless matrons arose on the air – sad as that of the banshees – but he was not astonished at the ruin he had caused, for he sprang from a race who never wondered at anything. Then he raised his hands,

and bid them to be silent. 'Now, my friends,' he said, 'be of good cheer. It was God who put it in my mind to cast down the stone, for it was sure to fall next winter, perhaps when ye would be gathered at breakfast or dinner, or when sleeping at night in your beds, when ye would be sure to be killed. See what I got under the rock', and he showed them the horn and the gold. 'This will build new homes for you, far better than the ones you have lost'. So he divided the contents of the horn amongst them and went off to dinner.

Then the villagers went to work with a will and soon three new palaces arose like phoenixes out of the ruins. They were the envy of the other villagers, for such, alas, is human nature; some of them prayed more fervently than they ever did before that Father James on his next visit would roll down another rock and find another bull's horn full of gold, in order that they too might build more up-to-date mansions. But, alas, their prayers, like many other prayers, remained unheard.



Presentation to Sal O'Malley, former Guardian Chieftain, by Ward O'Malley, Cashel, Co. Tipperary, current Guardian Chieftain. (Photo courtesy Ellen O'Malley Dunlop)

EXPERIENCES ON LAND AND SEA

Memoirs of Conor O'Malley

Contributed by Ann O'Malley Kelly

I became House Surgeon, known as House, in Mercers Hospital following my final medical examinations in 1917, where I had previously been a resident student. One of my co-resident students was Eddie Lipman, a Trinity student, a Jew, who became my lifelong friend. He joined the British army and spent most of his service in Salonika. I joined the British Navy.

While at Mercers, I became friendly with the Maxwell family. Dr Maxwell was a senior member of the medical staff at the Royal Victoria Eye & Ear Hospital, Adelaide Road, Dublin. He knew of my interest in Ophthalmology and invited me to the Eye & Ear, so I packed my bags and went to the Royal Victoria.

Eddie and I had a number of very interesting literary acquaintances such as Séamus O'Sullivan (Starky), the editor of the *Dublin Magazine*. We often visited the Sunday night séances, which A.E. (George Russell) held at his house. He was a wise guru, a journalist, painter and editor of the farmer's paper called the *Irish Homestead*. We all sat at his feet. A.E. abhorred booze and would not tolerate a drop of it in his house. Those who liked booze used park it somewhere outside his house and slip out from time to time.

At Sea

I joined the HMS *Furious* on 25 January 1918, with a temporary



Conor O'Malley, Kilmilkin, 1918-19,
Ship's Surgeon, HMS Furious.
(Photo courtesy Ann O'Malley Kelly)

commission as ship's surgeon. She was an entirely new departure in warships. She had no worthwhile armour, just a shell. She carried four big guns (two pairs), eighteen inch and other smaller guns, and two twenty-two inch torpedo tubes. She was eight hundred feet long and had an all out speed of about thirty knots. She carried seven aeroplanes on a great flight deck in front and abaft the funnel.

We carried about 1,300 men inclusive. The Captain, a four-ringer; commander a three-ringer; Lt Commander, two and a half ringer and a pilot two and a half ringer; three surgeons – fleet surgeon, three-ringer; myself, two-ringer and another two-ringer. All nice fellows. Also we carried Rear Admiral Phillipmore and his staff. His job was in charge of the long-range mission (the aircraft on board).

I was in charge of the booze and tobacco on board. I had some trouble with one drunken marine, a Major Innes. He resented me, as a Catholic, limiting his booze allowance. The Church of England Padre, called Urquhart, a Highlander Scot, was a grand fellow. I attended all of his services, one of the few who did.

In port, the officers always dressed for dinner while the band played selections. The senior officer presided and we drank the King's health. As a custom laid down by one of the Georges, the wine, port and Madeira went around the table anti-clockwise. We got good coffee but the tea was undrinkable, due to the water. It was said that the ship's stores steward made more money than the Admiral in presents. The mate called Burgess was a great friend of mine. All the officers were nice people, except for the drunken Major. We used to have a rough-house on Saturday nights, to let off steam in port, some wrestling etc. The Major attacked me. I was a tough proposition in those days and had him on the deck in a thrice! He never had another go at me.

The Boatswain's mate, each day, in the middle watch, sounded the rum tot signal. The rum was hauled up on deck and served out by regulation precision to each man. Most of the routine on board like this had been carried out since the days of Nelson. Signals were sounded all day.

In general we were a happy family and the officers kept up an annual dinner in London for fifteen years after the war. One of our airmen named Smart shot down a Zeppelin, the first ever, and so rendered these lighter-than aircraft machines obsolete for surveillance scouting. Up to then, they could hover aloft many thousands of feet up and spy on our movements, above the range of the heavier than aircraft.

I had to censor letters going ashore, lest they contained naval secrets. One letter I recall was from a boy to his mother. He said the PMO gave him such a

powerful dose of medicine that he spent the day in the 'eads', a nautical term for the crew's lavatories in the bow of the ship. He said next time he would not take any medicine, as he would rather die in his bed than in the 'eads'.

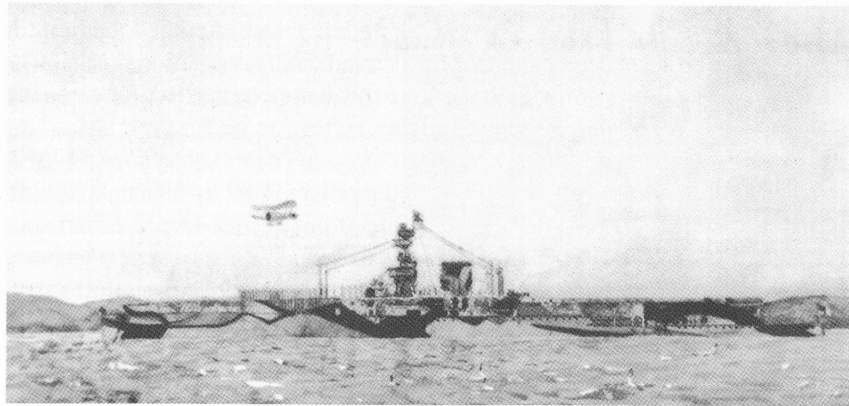
We were the first aircraft carrier in the world, just trying the best way by experiment to successfully take off and land aircraft on deck of a ship at sea. Everyone on board was racking his brains to find the best way to land safely. Planes were continually crashing with the funnel, getting wrecked and often injuring the pilots. One method used was partly successful, which was to carry grapples the pilot dropped on landing.

One fine morning I looked out the porthole of my cabin, as we anchored in the Forth. Alongside was the *Argus*, newly arrived from the dockyard and the answer to our problem. The *Argus* carried the funnel sticking out of its side leaving the whole length of deck fore and aft unimpaired for the taking off and landing of aircraft.

Life on Board

We unshackled from our buoy at the naval base in the Forth, protected from Hun submarines by a steel boom across the Forth, with a gate through which ships went in and out each Monday as a routine.

From Monday morning until Friday night each week we scoured the North sea, zigzagging continually night and day, at a good pace, so as not to give German submarines, who were always watching us through their periscopes, a chance to hit us with a deadly torpedo below the waterline. We never hove-to.



HMS Furious with camouflage paint, 1918, from the Officers' Christmas Card, 1938.
(Photo courtesy Ann O'Malley Kelly)

We had a screen of three destroyers, one line ahead, one port and one starboard. The submarines feared them and their deadly depth charges, once they spotted where a submarine was lurking. A submarine's only chance of escape was to lie doggo on the bottom absolutely silent and hope to escape.

In rough weather I have seen those small ships (destroyers) almost shipping it green, disappearing in the smother. Men on board them were paid hard lying money, the same as on the submarines. The German subs had good reason to fear them and if they spotted one they would drop depth charges and keep it up for hours.

One night a great storm blew down the Forth from west to east. One ship dragged her anchor and got impaled across the bows of the *Courageous*, a sister ship of ours (we were a group of three, *Furious*, *Glorious*, *Courageous*). The ship was cut in two across the bow of the *Courageous* but took a long time to sink. All hands were saved.

We were attacked by German aircraft. I recall one close shave, as we were scouting near Schleswig-Holstein, three German planes bombed us. I was standing on deck near the gunwale when a bomb just missed the ship and splashed me with water. Had it hit a fraction of a second sooner, the gunwale would have been blown to bits and yours truly could have gone up in smoke. A near shave! Curiously enough, I did not feel frightened. I just went below to my cabin and changed my clothes.

The German squadron went on to their base for a fresh lot of bombs and attacked us again. This time we shot down one of them. It landed in the water but did not sink. The pilot got up on top of his plane and stood to attention while we sailed around him, no stopping. (Cameras, forbidden on warships, appeared out of nowhere). I could not help but admire how the Huns stood at the salute. One of our destroyers picked up the German plane and crew and took them ashore to Forth.

The Great Flu Epidemic

In the Great Flu of 1918, when more people died than in the Great War, I got the flu. However, as there was no one to mind me and I was not too bad, I put it over on my feet. One of our ships, the *Niarana* was badly hit by flu, almost all of the ships company of seven hundred being affected, and I was transferred to it to combat the disease as their medical officer was also down with flu. I found him very ill and spitting up 'prune juice sputum' (bleeding from the lungs), a deadly sign of bad complicating pneumonia, which was the killer of the flu.

I immediately got him transferred to the hospital ship, which was a floating hospital and carried on board all the equipment of a hospital. I never heard how he got on, though I feared the worst. I dealt with the outbreak on the ship, luckily without losing a patient. There were no antibiotics then. I treated all with a nourishing fluid diet and syrup of iron-phosphate and strychnine, and kept all in their hammocks for three days after all fever had subsided. Luckily it wasn't a real killer.

War's End

One fine morning in 1918, we of the Royal Navy sailed out from the Firth of Forth and from Scapa Flow (Orkneys) to take surrender of the Great German High Seas Fleet. We British formed two lines of ships about half to one mile apart, and steamed out east. The Forth ships were on the southern line; the Scapa Flow Ships on the Northern line.

Presently we met the German High Seas Fleet and sailed past them until all were between our lines. All our ships' guns were at the ready, actually the ships (Germans) only carried skeleton crews, enough to sail them. It was to me, as to all of us, an awe-inspiring moment when those famous battleships we had heard so much about, the *Hindenburg*, the *Van den Tan* etc. showed up out of the mists on that morning.

I was looking that morning at a muster of naval power in ships the world had never seen before, nor would ever see again.

It must have been a sad day for the Germans or 'Huns' as we called them. At a given signal, all our ships turned round 180 degrees. The southern line with our *Furious* sailed back to Forth. The northern line was accompanying the German High Seas Fleet, which was to be imprisoned in Scapa Flow. All these great battleships were then to be brought down to Rosyth to be broken up into scrap. The Germans scuttled and sank them in Scapa Flow and so avoided the disgrace of having them turned into scrap. I was glad of this.

Again, I repeat, I saw that morning on the North Sea, a muster of sea power in battleships that the world had never seen before, nor would ever see again.

The Firth of Forth Revisited

The spot where we were shackled to one special buoy on the east of the Forth Bridge seen on 25 June 1980 was, to me, a sad sight, when I recall it full of battleships and the incidents that occurred during the time we anchored there, at

four hours, two hours, one hour notice to put to sea. At four hour's notice we could go to Edinburgh to visit or go ashore at Aberdare in Fife to play golf. I did ophthalmology at the Royal Infirmary.

The only regret I have had about this period was that I did not study for the FRCS. I had plenty of time.

After the War

When the War was over in 1919, for ten days I had charge of a hospital train, collecting sick and wounded sailors from different points over the north of England and bringing them south to Haslar Hospital, Portsmouth, for specialised treatment.

I was in complete command on the train with a team of sick-berth stewards (petty officers) working under my command. We lived on the 'fat of the land' as we journeyed from one collection point to another (seaports). I had the same status as the captain of a battleship. We covered a lot of country in ten days.

My job, of course, was to examine all the patients and diagnose and tabulate all their ailments. I did enjoy that interlude. At sea, of course, there was always the possibility of being sunk by a floating or sunken mine or by a Hun Torpedo, a 'mouldie'.

Further Notes

Conor had a small collection of photographs pertaining to this period of his life, on the backs of which he wrote several notes, e.g. 'one of our jobs was minesweeping, with other shipmates. I have spent pleasant hours shooting at floating mines in Summer 1919, as we scouted the North Sea. We used a Lewis machine-gun; our bullets would penetrate the mine covers and so sink them to the bottom of the sea. If we had hit a mine spike direct, it would explode with great force, so we always fired from behind the shelter of the ramp on the flying deck, as a protection against flying fragments of an exploding mine. We never got a direct hit on a spike but we sank many mines. Breaking a spike released some of the fluid onto the explosive in the interior of the mine. The mine resembled a large pot, turned upside down, the legs of the pot being the spike. A ship striking one of the spikes exploded the mine to blow a hole in the ship's hull. A ship on a level course could throw off a mine by the bow wave and so go safely. Any zigzag movement might swing a ship's stem across a floater mine thus exploding the mine and damaging the ship. Any movement of a ship across a minefield of fixed mines was very dangerous. On the Iceland patrol in midsummer, the night was so bright I could pick up pins off the deck. There was no darkness.'

Whilst awaiting demobilization, Conor transferred to the RAF. He was based at Manston Kent, the oldest air force base in Britain. One of the photographs shows him in uniform (naval) with two drivers and their ambulance. Finally a photo with the note, 'The Officer standing alongside me dressed in puttees commanded a crew of a Handley Page plane, the biggest in existence then. They were en route to fly to Spain but we had to wait many days at Manston to get the all-clear for the weather over the Pyrenees Mountains before attempting the flight. They were a jolly lot of boys. We toured the south of England on spees with an ambulance and drivers at our disposal.' Two additional pictures of aircraft show two planes, one of which was used for the trip to Spain,

Conor returned to Ireland and took up a job in the old workhouse hospital in Gort for a short period, before going to London to study for the DOMS (Ophthalmology qualification). In 1922 he was appointed as ENT and Ophthalmologist, 1928-31, and Radiologist to the Central Hospital, Galway, now UCH Galway, until his retirement in 1959.

Appendix, some facts concerning WW1

Conor was 90 when he revisited the Firth of Forth, having completed these memoirs. His manuscript was written in longhand and was typed some years after his death in 1982, which was the script I used for this article. I have made contact with the Royal Navy Museum, Portsmouth and recently visited the new War Museum, Manchester (The latter concentrated on the land war WW1) to verify facts and events mentioned.

HMS *Furious*

Known as FAST and FURIOUS the ship was laid down in 1915 and was built by Armstrong Whitworth, Newcastle-on-Tyne as a large light cruiser (battle ship). *Courageous* and *Glorious* were two half-sister ships in the same class. In 1917, she was modified to fleet carrier with sloping flying off deck which extended to the forecastle, (aircraft to be launched as the *Furious* steamed into the wind) and was fitted with two derricks for hoisting aircraft aboard. A hangar beneath her deck accommodated up to ten aircraft (some seaplanes, some wheeled).

She rejoined the fleet later in 1917 with a flying on deck 284 ft. and a second hangar added. The fore and aft decks were connected by a narrow ramp on either side of the funnel and bridge and this permitted aircraft to be moved between the two decks (this may have been as a result of the death of Commander Dunning, who had successfully taken off and landed on *Furious* in August, 1917. A few days later he was killed trying to do the same thing in a Sopwith Pup. The Pup was the predecessor of the Camel).

This was the ship as Conor joined her and said 'she had no worthwhile armour, just a shell' and continued 'a great flight deck in front and abaft the funnel'.

***Furious* Statistics**

1915: Laid down as large light cruiser. 19,500 tons, length 735pp, draft 24ft.

Displacement: 22,450 tons, maximum load 28,500 tons.

Complement: 748 officers and ratings. 350 Air crew.

Armaments: 2 x 18 inch guns on foredeck, which were removed to accommodate the flight decks.

2 x 5.5 inch guns

Submarines

1901, the British adopted submarines fitted with torpedo tubes, as a weapon, fast on the surface slow below water. The early submarines were powered by petrol. By WW1, they were powered by diesel engines, which changed the submarine from a short-range, tactical weapon (used for coastal surveillance) into a long-range strategic weapon, with great endurance and a wide radius of operation. It was the most significant warship development of that period. Coupled with the advances in torpedo design it was indeed a deadly weapon. The destroyer's main armament was the torpedo, with triple-tube mountings on the upper deck. The Germans deployed U-boats against allied merchant shipping from early in WW1.

Seaplanes

'We were attacked by a German aircraft. This was probably a seaplane. It landed in the water but didn't sink.' Seaplanes were used by both sides; they were catapulted off from the flight deck, but could not land on deck, and they were hoisted aboard. The planes were not recoverable unless they could land in the water and be brought aboard with hoists, which of course meant that the ship had to stop. Conor said, 'We scoured the North Sea, zigzagging continually night and day.' Had they stopped to recover a seaplane, they would be a sitting duck. The Seaplane was replaced by the wheeled aircraft, the single seat fighter aircraft, Sopwith Camel, which downed 3,000 enemy planes in WW1.

Mines

The Mine was a comparatively new weapon in naval warfare in WW1. By 1918, the North Sea, the Baltic Sea and the Channel were peppered with many thousands of mines. WW1 minelaying was undertaken by fast liners converted for the task or by destroyers similarly converted. 'Speed was of the essence, to be

laid in enemy waters. To be effective, it had to be done under cover of darkness, with the ships engaged well clear of the area both before and after the actual lay.' The early moored mines were, by 1918, replaced by the more deadly magnetic mine, which led to the development of a new form of warship, the minesweeper.

Shooting Down a Zeppelin

This was the major engagement by *Furious* 1918 and was the first such sea to air strike. Zeppelins had been a constant threat to both shipping and civilians of England during the war. It was a huge hydrogen-filled balloon. It could hover aloft high in the sky. If threatened, it could lift vertically by releasing gas. The Royal Naval Air Service (merged with the RFC to become RAF 1918) had made a number of attempts on the bases of these airships but with limited success.

The modifications to *Furious* 1917 made this strike possible, planned to take effect within the range of the Sopwith Camels which were on board and had a maximum speed of 118mph, 150 horse power Bentley engine, and an air endurance of 2.5 hours. The target was the three Zeppelin sheds at Tonder(n), North Germany, (now Denmark).

Tonder was one of the biggest Zeppelin bases. It consisted of three sheds, Toska 730 ft. long, 220 ft. high, and 130 ft. wide. It could house two of the biggest Zeppelins, which were 600 ft. long and 72 ft. wide. Toni and Tobias, the other two, were somewhat smaller. This successful raid, which took place on 19 July 1918, was actually the third such planned. The earlier two F5 and F6 were aborted by bad weather and other reasons.

Operation F7 sailed from Forth on 17 July 1918.

The battle group flotilla was made up of HMS *Furious* complete with dazzle paint (her camouflage), a destroyer escort and five escorting cruisers, HMS *Caledona*, HMS *Gallatin*, HMS *Royalist*, HMS *Phaeton* and HMS *Inconstant*. Also at sea in support were the vessels HMS *Revenge*, HMS *Royal Sovereign*, HMS *Ramillies*, HMS *Royal Oak* and HMS *Resolution* plus four other cruisers with their destroyer escorts

On board the *Furious* were 7 Sopwith Camels.

The mission was planned in two phases, three aircraft to depart the *Furious*, sailing into wind at 03.00 hrs. The second flight under command of Captain Smart to depart 03.22 hrs. All planes loaded with 2 x 50 lb bombs and 2 Vickers 303 machine-guns.

The first flight climbed to a height of 5,000 ft heading south down the coast of Denmark until turning east and climbing to 6,000 ft to approach Tondern (by following roads) a distance of approximately sixty miles, and located the site. All three went into attack and successfully discharged their bombs before heading back to the flotilla. The second flight arrived on the scene to find that one of the sheds was emitting smoke up to 1,000 ft, and went after the others, releasing their bombs at 800 ft, but were immediately attacked by anti-aircraft fire. The first strike had hit Toska, which contained 2 Zeppelins (L54 and L60) both of which were destroyed. Tobias was also hit and a balloon inside was damaged.

Captain Smart, the leader of the second flight was the only plane to land safely on deck of *Furious*. One pilot was lost. Three made forced landings near Esbjerg, Denmark. They were picked up but managed to return to England within a month. One landed on the water and was picked up by one of the destroyers. One had engine trouble and was forced to return to the fleet. He was successfully picked up, but lost his plane. Lt Yeulett, nineteen years of age, lost his life; his body and his aircraft were both washed ashore some days later.

Two of the pilots, one of whom was Captain Small, were awarded DSOs and four DFCs. Lt. Yeulett was awarded posthumously. (Lt. Yeulett was the grand uncle of William Casey whose website describes in detail the entire event). This was the first carrier-based sea to air strike against a land target in the world when on 19 July 1918, 7 Sopwith Camels, flying off from HMS *Furious* destroyed two Zeppelins and their sheds at Tondern and thereby 'rendered these lighter-than air-craft obsolete for surveillance'.

This was a historic and important victory for *Furious*, her big 18-inch guns had been removed to make room for the flying on deck. The *Furious*, as the only carrier in the fleet was suitably equipped for the Zeppelin base strike. A month earlier in another historic incident, she (*Furious*) had used both 5.5 inch anti-aircraft guns, and a fighter aircraft to thwart an attack by German seaplanes. At this time, her pilots would have been in training for the all-important Tondern raid.

Scapa Flow

21 November 1918 Admiral Sir David Beatty accepts the surrender of the German High Seas Fleet. The instructions ran 'The German flag will be hoisted down at sunset and will not be hoisted again without permission. The fleet will move to anchorage at Scapa Flow.'

After the Armistice, 74 ships of the Kaiser's Navy were ordered into Scapa

Flow to surrender. In November 1918, they arrived and for the next six months lay at anchor. The skeleton crew that manned the vessels was unhappy with the situation; poorly supplied directly from Germany, these men grew steadily more mutinous. In June 1919, the peace terms were announced. It is thought that Admiral Von Reuter, the German Officer commanding at Scapa Flow, read of these terms within the pages of *The Times* and as an act of final defiance decided to scuttle the fleet. When the British Fleet left its anchorage for exercise, the order to scuttle was issued.

Final Comment

Conor's long-term memory served him well as it includes all the vital elements of his experiences of the war and life at sea and the major threats and dangers to those on board the *Furious* during the final year of World War 1. As I read the memoirs, the words 'those that I fight I do not hate, those that I guard, I do not love' kept going through my mind. To use his own words he had a 'near shave'. As children, all that we, his family, knew about his navy experiences was that he had been splashed by a bomb! It is easy to understand the Saturday night roughhouse.

Sources

The information in the Appendix has been collected from various www sites/links and other sources including those listed below but I failed to find HMS *Niarana*. To date there has not been any confirmation from the Royal Naval Museum or the Fleet Air Arm Museum.

1. Peter Kemp, *The History of Ships* (London 2000), submarines, mines, torpedoes, seaplanes etc.
2. *The Raid on Tondern 1918*, The full account of the raid may be viewed at <http://www.casey.tgis.co.uk/webdfc/tonder.htm> courtesy of William Casey. Due to lack of space, only a synopsis is printed here, his full account is well worth reading.
3. Scapa Flow, the Orkney website 1998.
4. W.B. Yeats, 'An Irish airman foresees his death'.
5. My sincere thanks to my history student grandson, Max Kelly, for guiding me to the www, which was double dutch to me, and to my nephew Peter Mountain O'Malley who first e-mailed me about the Tondern site.

Other websites:

- www.wikipedia.org/wiki/aircraftcarrier
- www.littleairplanefactory.com/stokes/www
- www.ask.com Ask Jeeves.

Ann O'Malley Kelly was born in Galway, the daughter of Professor C.Conor O'Malley, Kilmilkin, Maam, Co. Galway and Dr. Sarah Joyce, Muintir Eoin, Maam. She was educated in Barna, Dublin and Galway. She is married to Simon Kelly, architect, from Westport. They have four children – Simon, ophthalmic surgeon; Conor and Sarah, architects, and Cathriona, graphic artist. Ann was elected Clan Chieftain in 1966, and is interested in golf, gardening, community activities and family history. She has been Assistant Editor of this Journal since 1997.

CONOR'S VISIT

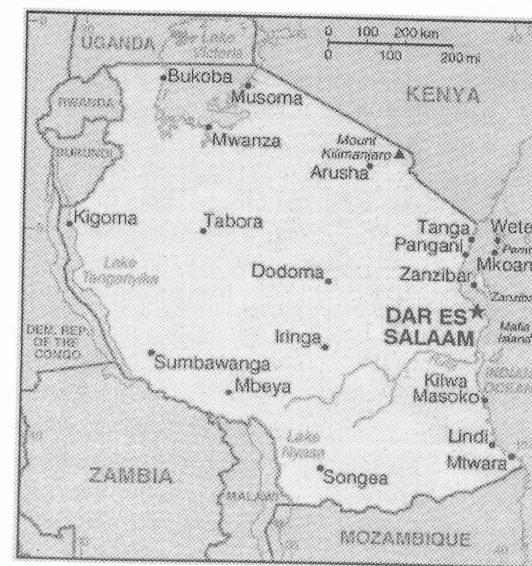
Grace O'Malley O'Hara

It was Dar-es-Salaam in 1964, two years after Uhuru (independence) and an era of transition, with British colonials handing over to Tanzanian nationals. A time of hope and vision for a new nation led by a great leader, Julius Nyerere.

My husband Aidan O'Hara and I lived in Kinandoni, a Dar suburb, with our three lovely daughters, ages one to five. We had an attractive house on a creek by the Indian Ocean, ringed with frangipani, palms and a huge mango tree. Aidan had a large general medical practice in Acacia Avenue, in the city centre. A few days earlier, he had flown to the UK with a very ill patient and my father Conor had arrived from Galway two weeks previously.

At 6 o'clock that morning I became aware that there were no sounds – a silence. There was no-one in the kitchen! The house staff, Hamsa and Athmani, and their families had vanished. Their homes behind the clumps of bougainvillea and alamander were empty. I ran to check the neighbours' houses and found them all empty – echoes of the *Marie Celeste*! Through my field-glasses I could see a trickle of traffic leaving the city across the Seelander Bridge. Quite extraordinary! My father remarked, 'You always had a great imagination, Grace.'

When I phoned Pip Fraser-Smith, one of our best friends, he had just time to say 'something political . . .' before the phone went dead. I realised we should stock up on food but the dukas (shops) in Oyster Bay were all shuttered. Luckily I noticed a Greek friend leaving Moosa the grocer's and was allowed in after several knocks. The frantic throng inside had nearly emptied the shelves. I only got the dregs, awful tins and



Map of Tanzania. (Photo courtesy Grace O'Hara)



Kinandoni House with (left to right): Grace, Deirdre, Sarah and Aidan.
(Photo courtesy Grace O'Hara)

powders which I passed out to my father, who was guarding the children. Mr. Moosa smiled calmly amid the chaos, 'Pay me later.'

That afternoon Pip cycled over the three miles between our houses, no mean feat in the sweltering humidity. He was alone as his family were on leave in Kent. Pip reckoned that a coup was being attempted, that the President had been warned by a British army officer and had sensibly disappeared. We stayed put. The children missed their afternoon swim at the beach, also their playmate Bukani, Hamsa's little daughter.

My father and Pip reminisced about times long past. Daddy talked about his great life in the Maam Valley, his visits to India and his 'quiet' war (WW1) on the HMS *Furious*. Pip's war (WW2) as an intelligence officer behind Japanese lines had been altogether riskier. I knew he had swum a river a quarter mile wide to steal a Japanese boat and rescue two men. And much more. Now Pip was the provincial agricultural commissioner, quite a big shot. That afternoon a lady in his department arrived with her car full of documents which she was determined not to allow into 'enemy hands'. She told us of her plan to sail to Beira or Laurenco Marques in Mozambique. Only 700 miles of hazardous coastline – we tried to keep straight faces.

After Pip left that evening I saw a light outside the house of our friend Zdenek and called in on him. He was Czech, a hydrologist working for the UN whose

family had fled in 1939 when Hitler invaded Sudetenland. We relaxed and had a beer. I felt that Zdenek had sources of information not available to the rest of us, possibly by radio, even though he denied this. He said that the President had taken refuge with the Holy Ghost Fathers at Pugu and that the Royal Navy were near Tanga.

Next day Aidan arrived, absolutely exhausted and worried, with four international newsmen in tow. He had been in Chapelizod, being cosseted by his great friends Billy and Josephine Dillon when they heard the East African news. He was stunned. When he flew to London and failed to get a seat to Nairobi, Aidan became desperate. Then, by a great stroke of luck, he met an air hostess whose family had been patients of his in Clara and she got him a seat. En route he befriended three reporters, whose Nairobi-based *Time* magazine colleague had chartered a plane to Dar-es-Salaam. In exchange for contacts and local help they agreed to bring Aidan with them. Furthermore the charter pilot agreed to remain one hour, if permitted, at the airport in Dar to await the O'Hara family and ferry us all back to Nairobi.

So there Aidan was, as if by magic, frantically urging us to leave. We didn't particularly want to go as we had almost been enjoying it all, despite being a little bit scared. Aidan was so distressed, worrying about what could happen to us while he was out on calls, that we agreed and threw clothes into suitcases in a blaze of flashlights. The little girls thought it was great fun and packed their party dresses. The airport, ringed with heavily-armed soldiers in full combat gear, brought us back to reality. It was a relief to take off in the Cessna and gaze out the windows at herds of zebra and wildebeest. I pointed out Mount. Kilimanjaro to the girls, who were entranced. When we arrived in Nairobi, which is 5,500 feet above sea level, they were cold for the first time in their short lives and were loaned cardigans by local English ladies.

Our hotel in Nairobi was excellent and we spent a day with the *Time* reporter's wife and family. My father and I were wine and dined by a tea planter and a Polish prince who lived in some splendour. Three days later we returned to a peaceful Dar-es-Salaam. Sadly, seven people had been killed in the failed coup, but the grateful citizens were entertaining the Royal Navy and the President was safe again in Government House.

Adam and Eve Are Good Enough

A week later Aidan suggested that I bring my father on safari. As he was

ravelling on to Nairobi I chose to go north to the game-filled Ngorongoro Crater. Nearby, at Olduvai Gorge, the Leakeys were delving back millions of years to humanity's origins. After two days driving we got to a signpost – left for Olduvai, right for the crater. Despite being a professor of medicine, Daddy had little interest in evolution – 'Adam and Eve are good enough for me' – so we turned right.



Sarah with Bukani
(Photo courtesy Grace O'Hara)

We passed the occasional giraffe grazing the tree-tops as we drove up the steep side of the crater to the hotel perched on the rim. I will never forget the view across the twelve miles of crater, filled with animals grazing on the lush grass. Kudu and gazelle hopped about while an ostrich rose from an enormous white egg. An astonishing variety of wildlife, far in excess of our expectations, made us feel it was a little corner of the Garden of Eden. En route to the airstrip at Arusha we stopped at Manyara Game Reserve, where the lions were reputed to climb trees. Daddy declared this to be 'bunkum' – the lions in India never did such a thing. Our first lion, sleepy and sated at the top of a tree, he greeted with silence.

At the park we hired a driver and a Masai guide. Our guide was full of chat and very flirtatious. The six-inch discs which his earlobes usually contained had been removed and his ears dangled empty to his uniform collar. Every time he turned his head around to say 'look at the water hole!' or some such exhortation, his ears followed slightly later. We found this hilarious, particularly my father, who sputtered with merriment and comments as *Gaeilge*. I had to explain in Swahili to the concerned Masai that there was nothing wrong with the old man but that he didn't speak English.

My father had plenty of stories to tell when he got home. As for me, the long rains came early and washed away the road, adding about 400 miles to my thousand-mile drive home to Aidan and my girls.

Grace O'Malley O'Hara, an optometrist, is the eldest daughter of the late Conor O'Malley, Barna, Co. Galway. She was married to Aidan O'Hara, a General Medical Practitioner. They lived for some years in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanganyika, with their three children. Grace now lives in Dublin where her husband died in 1979.

FACTION FIGHTING IN THE WEST

Ann O'Malley Kelly

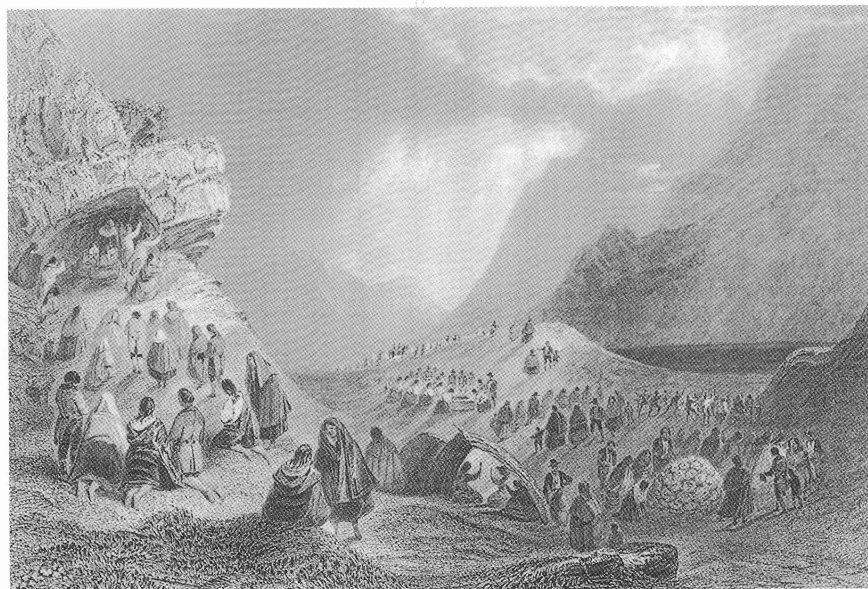
Faction or stick fighting was common throughout Ireland in the first half of the nineteenth century. The following is an eye witness account of one such fight in Connemara in the Summer of 1834, recorded by Henry Inglis in his book *A Journey throughout Ireland during the Spring, Summer and Autumn of 1834*, an account of his travels throughout Ireland. At this period, it was fashionable for journalists and travel writers to publish a book or articles in journals of the tour undertaken, recounting experiences and encounters, sights, sounds and records of people and customs, etc. – their Irish experiences.

The opportunity to witness a faction fight would be great copy; an opportunity not to be missed. When he heard at the Corrib Lodge Inn (now Keane's, Maam), an 'inn of rare excellence', of a *pattern* which was due to take place the next day, which might have some *shillelagh* fighting, he admits 'I, of course, resolved to be present.'

The second decade of the nineteenth century saw the development of a new road system under the direction of the Scottish engineer, Alexander Nimmo, in the western region of Connemara. The major roads constructed at this time were, firstly, the carriageway linking Oughterard to the newly built town of Clifden. Secondly, the road through the mountainous pass known as Maumwee (Mám Aodha) which linked the Oughterard/Clifden Road with Maam at a point where the Bealanabrack (Béal Átha na mBreac) River flows into Lough Corrib. Thirdly, the road linking Maam/Leenane through the Maam valley. These developments had opened up the region. Prior to this, access to the region was by horseback or by boat from Galway.

Shortly prior to the road developments, the Blakes, who on their migration to their property at Renvyle, in the North West of Connemara, published an account of the domestic life, habits and manners of the 'people of the region'. Blake, en route to Renvyle describes the ascent of Maam Turk,

'we quitted the open part of the lake [the Corrib] . . . we entered the little river of BealnaBrack. It was a true mountain stream, and its serpentine course along the valley [Maam] was soon too shallow to admit our boat. We ate our cold dinner on board, and then mounting the ponies, which we found in waiting pursued our journey . . . along a path so wild and rugged, that it seems to have been marked out by the mountain goats or by the red deer, which are said still to haunt these untamed regions . . . [We] must prepare to climb the mountain side following the flight of the eagle . . . It was Nature in her wildest garb . . . The new road, projected by Mr Nimmo, is marked out along this valley . . . The descent of the mountain's side was more dangerous than the ascent had proved (Blake, pp 76-8).



A *Pattern* in Connemara. (Bartlett Print)

With the publicity generated by the Blakes and the new road network, Connemara became the new destination of travel writers such as Inglis, who continues with his story:

A very celebrated *pattern* was to be held, on a singular spot, high up amongst the mountains, on a little plain, on the top of the pass between Maamturk and the neighbouring mountain – an elevation of about 1,200 feet, and I, of course, resolved to be present. A *pattern* was, originally, a religious ceremony, and was, and still is, always celebrated near to a holy well: but although some still frequent the *pattern* for devotional purposes, it is now resorted to chiefly as a place of recreation . . . I was accompanied, in my excursion, by the innkeeper; and the road being rather toilsome, I was accommodated with a horse . . . I soon found the horse to be a dangerous companion, and was glad to leave him behind at a cabin door . . .

Far up the winding way, for miles before us, and for miles behind too, groups were seen moving up the mountainside; the women with their red petticoats, easily distinguishable; some were on foot, some few on horseback and some rode double . . .

Everybody in this part of the country is called Joyce; and the spot where the *pattern* is held, is claimed by the Joyces to be in Joyce's country; but this is not admitted by the Connemara boys; and accordingly, two factions, the Joyces and their opponents, usually hold *patterns* near the same ground, though not close together; but yet so near, as to make it impossible, that the meetings should break up without a scrimmage. The Joyces are a magnificent race of men; the biggest and stoutest, and tallest, I have seen in Ireland . . . When I reached the summit of the Pass . . . the scene was most striking and picturesque. There were a score tents or more – some open at the sides, and some closed; hundreds in groups were seated on the grass, or on the stones which lie abundantly there. Some old persons were yet on their knees, beside the holy well, performing their devotions

. . . I was warmly welcomed, as a stranger, by many, who invited me into their tents. Of course, I accepted the invitation; and the pure potheen circulated freely.

By and by, however, some boastful expression of a Joyce appeared to give offence to several at the far end of the tent . . . The language . . . changed to Irish. Two or three glasses of potheen were quickly gulped by most of the boys; and the Innkeeper . . . whispered that there would soon be some fighting . . . I had been barbarous enough to wish I might see a regular faction fight; and now I was likely to be gratified . . .

I shook hands with the 'boys' nearest me . . . and, retiring from my tent took up a safe position on some neighbouring rocks. I had not long to wait; out sallied the Joyces and a score of other 'boys' from several tents at once, as if there had been some preconcerted signal; and the flourishing of *shillelahs* did not long precede the using of them. Any one to see an Irish fight, for the first time, would conclude that a score or two must inevitably be put *hors-de-combat*. The very flourish of a regular *shillelah*, and the shout that accompanies it, seems to be the immediate precursors of a fractured skull; but the affair, though bad enough, is not so fatal as it appears to be: the *shillelahs*, no doubt, do sometimes descend upon a head, which is forthwith a broken head; but they oftener descend upon each other: and the fight soon becomes one of personal strength. The parties close and grapple; and the most powerful man throws his adversary; fair play is but little attended to; two or three often attack a single man; nor is there a cessation of blows, even when a man is on the ground.

On the present occasion, five or six were disabled but there was no homicide, and after a scrimmage, which lasted perhaps ten minutes, the Joyces remained masters of the field . . . I noticed, after the fight, that some, [women], who had been opposed to each other, shook hands and kissed; and appeared as good friends as before (Inglis, pp46-52).

Inglis describes the event as a *scrimmage* and that the combatants were 'friends as before' – he could have expected a more violent affair with women entering into the fray armed with stones loaded into a sock or apron and used as a sling, an account of which was recorded about the same time in Hall's *Ireland: its Scenery, Character, etc.*, Vol. 1 (London, 1841).

The weapon used was a *shillelah* (this was an English term for the fighting stick), generally a piece of blackthorn, which was 'seasoned in the chimney for a long time, all the knobs were cut away and the hole bored at one end, and a strong leather thong put through, long enough to pass through the hand. The blackthorn was held by the middle, and only one half of it could give a blow. If it were held by the end, it would be indeed a deadly weapon (P.D. O'Donnell, p 185). Oak, ash or holly were also seasoned for use as fighting sticks.

The venues for the fights were *patterns* such as Mám Éan, fairs, markets, racecourses and frequently the streets of towns and villages. The fights were between families, clans, namesakes, baronies or parishes, the remote cause of the fighting being, perhaps, some insult real or imaginary (P.D. O'Donnell, p 9). Mám Éan is located on the boundary of Ballinahinch barony, the home of the 'Connemara Boys' and the barony of Ross known as Joyce's Country.

Were the Connemara boys members of the O'Malley Clan?

Conor O'Malley in his memoirs of a Connemara childhood tells us that Patrick, his great grandfather disliked all Joyces as did all O'Malleys (*O'Malley Journal* 9, p 9). James Berry in *Tales of the West of Ireland* whose mother was an O'Malley from west of Louisburgh has many stories about O'Malleys, O'Malley smugglers, O'Malley priests, O'Malley packmen, big O'Malleys, small O'Malleys, black haired and blonde haired O'Malleys, etc., has one Pat Malley tell the 'Tale of the Faction Fights of the Galvanaghs (whose ancestors came from the barony of Gallen, Swinford/Foxford area, Mayo) and the Gromastoons (from Falduff, Kilgeever, Moneen and other villages east and north of Louisburgh in the barony of Murrisk).

The reason given for this reprisal fight was the animosity between the two factions caused by brothers-in-law. Billy Lavelle and Owen O'Malley (Galvanaghs), the local teachers who had thrashed a chap named O'Donnell, whose father was a thorough Gromastoon. The fight took place on Christmas Day in the year 1829, in the village of Louisburgh, a bloody affair that caused the death of one protagonist; 'there was an inquest held which resulted in the transportation of many for twenty years to Van Diemen's Land' (Berry, pp 7-10).

Berry also recounts the story told by old George O'Malley, the smuggler from Achill of the great fights between the Joyces of Joyce Country and the Malleys of Maam. The Joyces challenged the Malleys to fight them in Mám Éan – at the pattern held on Garland Sunday, known as Domhnach Chrom Dubh.

The Joyces were the largest men I have ever seen, that is, each of them had a body as large as a featherbed . . . I knew they would be beaten, for they were too unwieldy; they lacked suppleness, and vigour, the two most essential qualities of fighting men. The O'Malleys were about the smallest men to be seen anywhere, but they had the dash and vigorous energy of men who are determined to conquer, and they succeeded, for the Joyces were about the worst men I have ever seen in a faction fight.

The Joyces drew up in the order of battle, but made no effort to assail their foes, so the intrepid O'Malleys began the attack, led on by a very small, neat, fair-haired man, who turned out to be the most expert man with a stick I ever saw. The Joyces went down before them like stooks of corn in a storm, and in ten or fifteen minutes there wasn't a man named Joyce but lay stretched out on the heather, while the O'Malleys stood over them, thrashing them as though they were dusting carpets (Berry, p 157).

These Mám Éan faction fights could be regarded as minor events, as they did not appear to attract the attention of the law. There is no mention of law, police or militia reports of either of these events, which probably points to the fact that they were just a *scrimmage*. As described by Inglis, an annual outing letting off steam, could be likened to an inter parish football or hurling match, a

bit of a party following the religious observances.

'The law tended to turn a blind eye on such events, to condone faction fighting, regarding it as being good for the Ascendancy that the country people should fight themselves rather than the civil and military forces of the government' (P.D. O'Donnell, p 34).

The reports from the 1930s to the Folklore Commission have family memoirs of former factions, etc., 'an old friend from Louisburgh, who is dead nearly seventy years' said 'that when he was young, the favourite sport on a Sunday was stick fighting. The stick, a blackthorn, was held by the middle; one end protected the vulnerable elbow (P.D. O'Donnell, p 182).'

The Decline of the Faction Fights

The Catholic hierarchy and clergy and the Liberator, Daniel O'Connell, working hard to put down the factions, met with local success, notably in Tipperary and Limerick in the 1830s – but it was, however, the formation of the Irish Constabulary and the measures taken by Thomas Drummond when the police had orders to interfere on the slightest sign of disturbance, to disperse the factions and arrest all disorderly persons, that put an end to the fighting. 'The temperance campaign and the Great Famine, the Young Irelanders and the Fenians gave strong impetus to the downward trend, and factionism ended in the 1880s through the influence of the Land League movement (P.D. O'Donnell, pp 41-6).'

Modern Mamean (Mám Éan)

In the latter years of the twentieth century there has been a great revival of the traditional religious pilgrimage to Mamean which takes place annually on Garland Sunday at the end of July. This has been spearheaded by Fr. Micheál Mac Gréil S.J., who had a statue of St. Patrick which was sculpted by Cliodhna Cussen, air lifted from Coffey's monumental sculptors in Westport to the top of Mamean, and more recently a small chapel has been built in which mass is celebrated to confirm the devotion to St. Patrick. Mamean is approached from Recess, the Inagh Valley or the Maam Valley. The final part of the pilgrimage is made on foot, as hitherto.

Berry did not witness the fight which Inglis described. His yarn is recounted by the old smuggler Captain George O'Malley from stories told him by the Rapparee Brian McNamara, 'then on his seventh tumbler of punch'. Of course O'Malley heard what he wanted to hear, which was that the O'Malleys won the day. Captain George no doubt had tumbler for tumbler with the storyteller. Inglis