

THE MEN
WILL TALK
TO ME

MAYO INTERVIEWS
BY ERNIE O'MALLEY

There were 4 Brigades in Mayo in 1916. You have better check on that I saw with Dick Walsh and Ned Moran. He has planned in 1913 to write to the papers about starting an Irish army. Sean Mac Dermott is one organised this place and he said he has gone across Fenian records and 2 of the 3 best organised places in Ireland were John Parnell, Sean Teernan and John Keenan. Parnell was a famous leader from Westport and my grand father worked for him at night. My grand father always said "don't ask me any questions and I'll take you no lies". Parnell's brother brought in the rifles to Dublin for the Fenian Rising.

Calasdroolam on the South Shore of the Shannon

Kilbray John Ryan's John Walsh.

I was O'Malley then of the Mayo Brigade but in 1915, 4 Bds was formed. He was P.O. The Brigadier John Derry was created almost at once, and he was prior to his arrest. nomination he as Brigadier.

The first Mayo Brigade stretched from Achill, Castlebar, Westport stretching to the town of Long Walk and to Bally in South Mayo.

Submarines: In North Mayo O'Malley was a County councillor. He didn't do anything about it, but he knew about the Porrochy area. In 1915 I was then

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MAYO INTERVIEWS
BY ERNIE O'MALLEY

EDITED BY
CORMAC K. H. O'MALLEY AND
VINCENT KEANE

A page from the Michael Kilroy interview.
(UCDA O'Malley Notebooks P17b/101, p. 39.
Courtesy of UCD Archives)



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*Dedicated to the men and women of Mayo
who served their country*

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Many people have helped unstintingly along the journey to transcribe some of the more than 450 handwritten interviews of survivors of the War of Independence and Civil War. Special thanks should be given to Eunan O'Halpin at Trinity College Dublin's Institute for Contemporary History, who facilitated a one-day seminar on this transcription process back in 2009.

In terms of this Mayo volume, it could not have been undertaken but for the noble assistance of Dominic Price, initially, and Vincent Keane, subsequently. Dominic undertook the initial transcription of most of these Mayo interviews; those who also assisted with initial transcriptions were Frances-Mary Blake for Michael Kilroy, Roddy Ryan for his grandfather P. J. Rutledge, and Cormac Ó Comhraí with one interview, parts of which were included in *The Men Will Talk to Me: Galway Interviews by Ernie O'Malley*, which he and I co-edited. Vincent Keane has assisted greatly with his extensive local knowledge of people and places in Mayo, which is essential to getting facts and locations accurately recorded. A project like this needs local lore, and Vincent undertook this task professionally and generously, and truly this volume could not have been completed without him.

For photographs, copyright and other permissions we are

indebted to Anthony Leonard, who provided photographs by his grandfather, J. J. Leonard; Seamus Grealy for his father, Johnny Grealy; Robert Ryan for his grandfather, P.J. Rutledge; Micky Kilcawley for his father, Matt Kilcawley; Mary Maguire McMonagle for her father, Tom Maguire; Dr Pádraig Carney and Pádraig Walsh for Tom Carney; James Reddiough and Lew Thorne for the Swinford IRA Training Camp photograph, as well as to Mercier Press for their marvellous archive collection.

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CORMAC O'MALLEY

As this is a history with a difference and the work was already done by Ernie O'Malley back in the 1950s, it was just a case of identifying dates and strange place names, and providing short biographical notes on various individuals. My main source of information was the public libraries. The research section of the Castlebar Public Library provided me with much of what I was seeking and I extend my thanks to the staff there. Marguerite, in Westport Public Library, made some phone calls for me when I sought information regarding the North Mayo Brigade from Ballina Library. The librarians in Sligo also helped out when I was researching the Enniscrone area.

When seeking information about the Kilmeena ambush, I attended the annual ceremony at the Republican plot in Myna and was introduced to several interesting people there. I met relatives of Patrick Marley (killed accidentally at Rockfield), and Jim Browne and Pat Staunton (killed at Glenhest and Kilmeena respectively). Also in attendance was Peadar Kilroy, son of Michael, and he put me right about where Jim Moran came from. The Hughes sisters of Ballina were made known to me and told me of their father, Michael, who was injured but escaped that fateful day at Kilmeena. Hugh Feehan of Rossow was there too and had some interesting snippets of information regarding events in the Kilmeena area. Liam Ryder, always enthusiastic about national events, helped in identifying some of the townlands that were proving problematic.

In the Islandeady district I enlisted the help of Paddy Browne of Derrycourane. Paddy has an encyclopaedic mind, and he brought me around the area pointing out the Big Wall, the spot where Thomas Lally and Thomas O'Malley were killed, Driminahaha RIC Barracks, and the house where Paddy Jordan lived. Paddy knew, and was a friend of, Paddy Cannon, whose interview is included in this book. He actually got to fire some rounds from Cannon's famous Mauser rifle.

In Westport, over the months, I spoke to relations of men who were on active service in 1920–24. It was all very informal and I gleaned much information then. Ger Geraghty provided background information on his grand-uncle, Joe Ring. Patsy Staunton told me of his uncle, Michael ‘Bully’ Staunton, and how he emigrated to Chicago, never to return. Maureen Lambert, niece of ‘Broddie’ Malone, provided essential dates. Richie Joyce gave me information on his Uncle Rick, a member of the West Mayo Brigade flying column. Liamy MacNally gave me interesting facts on his grand-uncle, Willie Malone. Pádraig Kennedy was always available to tell of his uncle, Ned Sammon, quartermaster of the Westport Battalion during the Truce and Civil War. Dave Keating looked up information for me regarding the Sligo brigades. I also wish to thank Harry Hughes, who was always ready to impart relevant information for this project. A sincere thanks to all mentioned.

Lastly, I wish to thank Cormac O’Malley for inviting me to participate in this venture. It was a pleasure to be involved with the work of Ernie O’Malley.

VINCENT KEANE

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------------|--|
| ASU | Active Service Unit or Flying Column |
| Auxie/Auxies | Auxiliary Division of the RIC |
| Capt. | Captain |
| C/S | Chief of Staff |
| EOM | Ernie O’Malley |
| GAA | Gaelic Athletic Association |
| GHQ | General Headquarters |
| IRA | Irish Republican Army |
| IRB | Irish Republican Brotherhood |
| the Joy | Mountjoy Gaol, Dublin |
| Lt | Lieutenant |
| O/C | Officer Commanding |
| PA | Póilíní Airm or Military Police |
| RIC | Royal Irish Constabulary |
| Tintown 1, 2 | Tintown internment camps No. 1 and No. 2 |
| UCDA | UCD Archives |
| V/C | Vice-Commanding Officer |

PREFACE

INTRODUCING THE ERNIE O'MALLEY MILITARY INTERVIEWS

CORMAC K. H. O'MALLEY

Though born in Castlebar, Co. Mayo, in 1897, Ernie O'Malley moved to Dublin with his family in 1906 and attended CBS secondary school and university there. After the 1916 Rising he joined the Irish Volunteers while pursuing his medical studies, but in late 1917 he left home and went on the run. He rose through the ranks of the Volunteers and later the Irish Republican Army, and by the time of the Truce in July 1921 at the end of the War of Independence, or Tan War as it was known, he was a commandant-general commanding the 2nd Southern Division covering parts of three counties and with over 7,000 men under him.

O'Malley was suspicious of a compromise being made during the peace negotiations which resulted in the Anglo-Irish Treaty of December 1921 and reacted strongly against the Treaty when it was announced. As the split developed in the senior ranks of the IRA in early 1922, he was appointed director of organisation for the anti-Treaty Republicans who then took over the Four Courts in April. When the Four Courts garrison surrendered in June, he managed to escape. He was then appointed acting assistant chief of staff and officer commanding the Northern and Eastern Divisions, or half of Ireland. In early November he was captured in a dramatic shoot-out and was severely wounded. Ironically his wounds probably saved his life, as otherwise he would have been court-martialled and executed. While in Mountjoy Gaol in



Map showing counties, brigade areas and areas of the four Western Divisions.

1923, O'Malley was elected as a TD and later, despite his poor health, he went on a forty-one-day hunger strike. Nevertheless, he survived – a matter of mind over body!

Having been released from prison in July 1924 and still in poor health, O'Malley went abroad to the south of Europe to help recover his health. He later returned to his medical studies in 1926, but in 1928 headed for the United States. While there he began to write his much acclaimed autobiographical memoir, *On Another Man's Wound*, published in 1936 after he returned to Dublin. He had spent seven years writing that book, which he meant to be more of a generic story of the Irish struggle than of his own activities. It was deemed to be a literary success and added to his reputation among many of his former comrades.

O'Malley's memoir on the Civil War was not ready for publication, requiring more work, and over the next twenty years he sought to become more familiar with the Civil War period as a whole. What started out in the late 1930s as an effort to supplement his own lack of knowledge, had developed by 1948 into a full-blown enterprise to record the voices, mostly Republican, of the survivors of the 1916–23 struggle for independence. He interviewed more than 450 survivors, across a broad spectrum of people, by himself, covering the Tan War and the Civil War – all this at a time when the government was establishing the Bureau of Military History to record statements made by participants in the fight for freedom.

In the course of his interviews O'Malley collected a vast amount of local lore around Ireland. He wrote a series of articles for *The Kerryman*, but withdrew them. Instead he used the articles for a series of talks on Radio Éireann in 1953. Subsequently the lectures were published in a series called *Raids and Rallies* in *The Sunday Press* in 1955–56. In the meantime he used the interviews to add to his own Civil War memoir, *The Singing Flame*, published posthumously in 1978, and to write a

biographical memoir of a local Longford Republican organiser, Seán Connolly, entitled *Rising Out: Seán Connolly of Longford, 1890–1921*, also published posthumously, in 2007.

O'Malley was familiar with the field of folklore and was well read in Irish and international folklore traditions, and indeed in the early 1940s had collected folklore stories from around his home area in Clew Bay, Co. Mayo. He also picked up ballads and stories about the 1916–23 period. His method for interviewing was to write rapidly in a first series of notebooks as his informant was speaking and then to rewrite those notes into a second series of more coherent notebooks. Occasionally he would include drawings of the site of an ambush or an attack on a barracks. In the rewrite process he added in his own comments in parentheses. Given his overall knowledge of the period, based on his own Tan War activities and his Civil War responsibilities, he usually commanded a high regard from his informants. He felt that his former comrades would talk to him and tell him the truth.

From an examination of his interviews, O'Malley does not appear to have used a consistent technique, but rather he allowed his informant to ramble and cover many topics. In his rewrite of an interview he often labelled sections such as Tan War, Truce, Civil War, Gaols, Treatment of Prisoners, RIC, IRB, Spies, Round-ups and the like. The tone is conversational, allowing the narrative to unfold. He wrote down the names of people and places phonetically rather than accurately. The interviews are fresh and frank and many of these men's stories may have never been told even to their children, as they did not speak openly about those times. Family members have said they could hear the voices of their relatives speaking through the O'Malley interviews, because O'Malley had been able to capture their intonations and phrasing so clearly about matters never discussed in the family before.

This present volume reveals ten O'Malley interviews that

cover activities in far-flung corners of Mayo, and neighbouring parts of Roscommon and Sligo, during the War of Independence and the Civil War. All of these Mayo men rejected the Treaty and so their interviews reflect strong Republican opinions among the Mayo Volunteers. Only three of the men interviewed here made statements to the Bureau of Military History.

In transcribing O'Malley's series of interviews some modest changes have been made to help the reader better understand the interview. To enable reference to O'Malley's original pagination, his pages are referred to in bold brackets, such as [39R], the L or R representing the left or right side of his original page. Unclear words have been put in italics indicating our best attempt to decipher them. The sequence of some interviews has been changed to better reflect the historical chronology, but the original pagination has been noted and in most cases where this has been done it is also footnoted. Some interviews had two men speaking and they are clearly identified. Abbreviations have been standardised and many of them have been expanded to the full word, such as Battalion or Brigade for Bn or Bde. Extensive footnotes provide a better understanding of the people, places and incidents involved, and some are repeated in a subsequent chapter to allow each chapter to be read separately as a complete story. The text has been revised to include the correct spellings for names and places, and the original spellings, usually written phonetically by O'Malley, have been included in the footnotes at their first appearance in each interview. O'Malley regularly inserted his own comments inside parentheses, and these are reflected in the current text. Our editorial comments have been added in square brackets. Some new headings and subheadings with dates have also been included in square brackets for clarity.

Each interview has been reproduced here almost in full. Certain parts can be difficult to read as O'Malley left many blank spaces where he was missing information, and these are

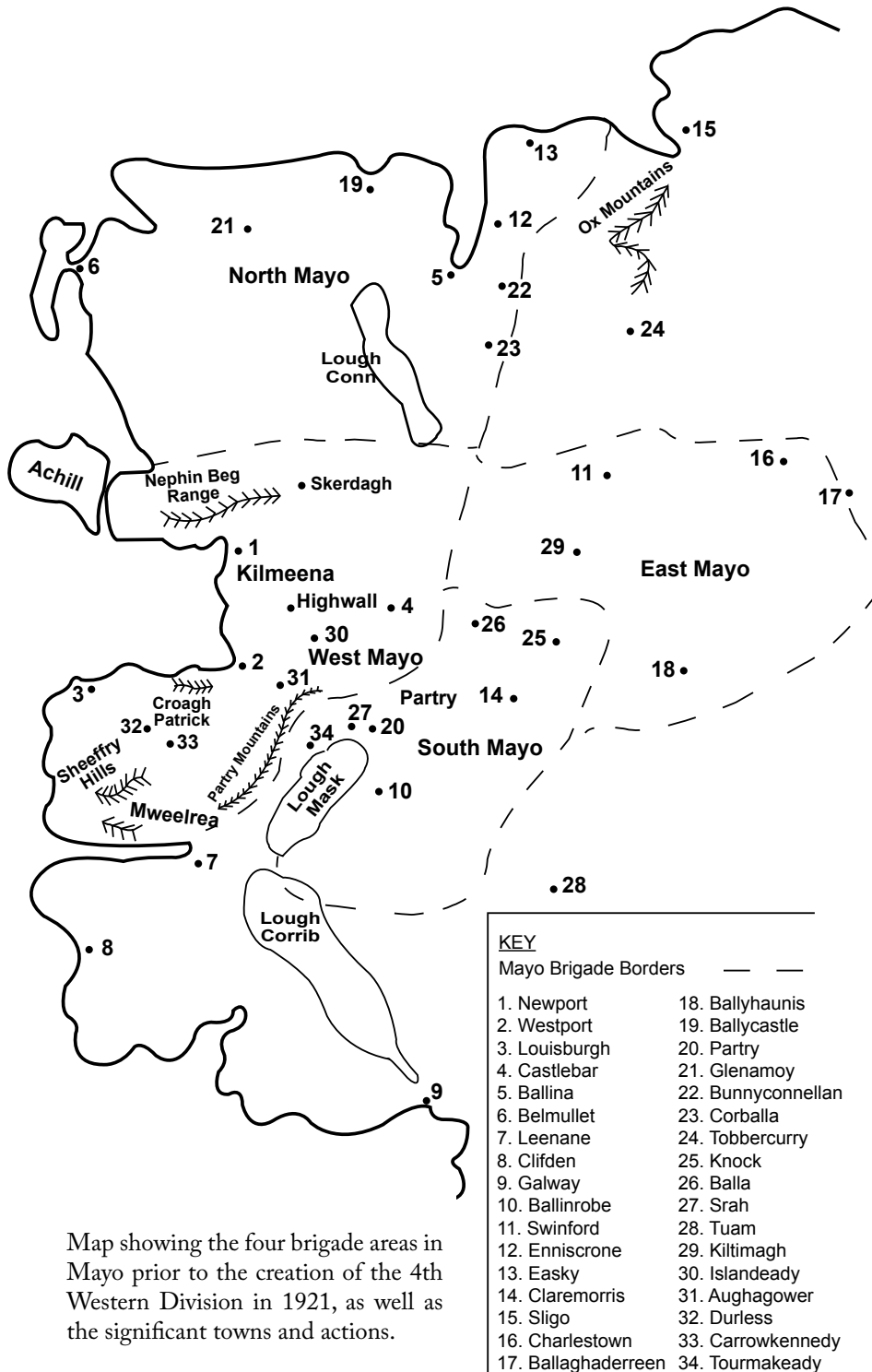
represented by ellipses in the text, but this sometimes means that the sentence makes little or no sense. Ellipses have also been used to indicate places where the text is indecipherable. The style of local phrasing used in the interviews has been retained, some of which is no longer in common usage and may read strangely to the modern reader. In many instances names and facts have been added in a seemingly random manner to the text and their relevance to the discussion can be difficult to ascertain. However, we felt it was important to maintain the integrity of the original text, so these problems have been left unedited.

We have relied on the integrity of O'Malley's knowledge of facts and his ability to question and ascertain the 'truth', but clearly it is possible that the details as related here to O'Malley reflect only the perceptions of the individual informant rather than the absolute historical truth, and the reader must appreciate this important aspect.

O'Malley interviewed some men several times, and thus the same incident may be recorded more than once. The duplications have been included as they illustrate clearly how a memory by the same person about the same incident may differ at different times, especially if another person is present. O'Malley made far more comments in these Mayo interviews than in the other volumes, some of them quite critical, perhaps because though he was not actually involved in any of these activities, he had heard so much about the Mayo stories over the years.

For those not familiar with military organisational structures such as the IRA during this period, it might be helpful to know that the largest unit was a division, which consisted of several brigades, each of which had several battalions, which in turn were composed of several companies at the local level. There were usually staff functions, such as intelligence and quartermaster roles, at the division, brigade and battalion level, and usually only officers at the company level.

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IMPACTING CO. MAYO AND ITS BRIGADES, 1918–24



Note: Actions in brigade areas are denoted by N=North, S=South, E=East, W=West.

1918

- Apr. Conscription Crisis – the proposal that conscription be introduced to Ireland is vigorously opposed.
- May 17 Many prominent Republican leaders arrested because of the so-called ‘German Plot’.
- Nov. 11 Armistice Day; assault on Westport citizens by the RIC and the British Army.
- Dec. 14 All four Mayo constituencies return Sinn Féin TDs in the general election. E: É. de Valera, N: Dr J. Crowley, S: W. Sears, W: J. MacBride.

1919

- Mar. 29 W: Westport: John C. Milling, resident magistrate, killed.
- Apr. 14 W: Sinn Féin Club in Westport closed by the RIC.

1920

- Apr. 3 W: Easter burning of tax offices and RIC barracks after their evacuation around Ireland includes Deergrove/Driminahaha, Cloontumper and Carrowkennedy Hut.
- Apr. 4 E: Ballyhaunis: IRA attack RIC patrol, two wounded.
- Apr. 20 N: Bellacorick Barracks burned (attack led by Paddy Hegarty, Seán Corcoran).
- May 12 E: Bohola Barracks burned (attack led by Seán Corcoran, M. Mooney, Tom Ruane).

- June N: Cloongee House, Foxford, raided for arms.
- June E: Ambush on two lorries of soldiers at Swinford – no casualties.
- June 4 Mayo County Council local elections: Dr John Madden, Tom Maguire, Ned Moane, P. J. Rutledge and twenty-four others win a clean sweep for Sinn Féin.
- June 15 N: Belmullet RIC Constable Pierce Doogue killed.
- July At Castlebar the decision is made to create four Mayo brigades: West (O/C Tom Derrig), North (O/C Tom Ruane), East (O/C Seán Corcoran), and South (O/C Tom Maguire).
- July 1 N: Culleens RIC Barracks attacked.
- July 17 E: Swinford: IRA ambush 2nd Border Regiment patrol, both soldiers wounded.
- July 22 N: Ballina: IRA attack RIC patrol: RIC Sgt Thomas R. Armstrong fatally wounded; Constable Regan seriously wounded.
- Aug. 1 E: Near Ballyhaunis, IRA attack lorry of soldiers, three wounded.
- Aug. 19 E: Swinford Railroad Relay Supply Station destroyed.
- Aug. 22 E: Ballyvary Barracks attacked (led by Seán Corcoran and Seán Walsh).
- Aug. 30 N: Enniscrone Coast Guard Station attacked and burned.
- Aug. 30 N: Belmullet Coast Guard Station, Ballyglass, raided and destroyed.
- Aug./Sep. W: Tom Derrig arrested and M. Kilroy succeeds him as O/C West Mayo Brigade.
- Nov. P.J. Rutledge arrested.
- 1921**
- Jan. 9 N: Beckett's Mill, Ballina, attacked by RIC; Patrick Coleman captured.
- Jan. 24 Archbishop of Tuam, Dr T. P. Gilmartin, condemns the IRA.
- Mar. 7 S: At Kilfaul, near Partry, a number of soldiers are wounded (Capt. Chatfield, Corporal Bell, Privates Wade and Southworth) and one is killed by an ASU of the South Mayo Brigade.
- Mar. 7 S: IRA carry out the Portroyal ambush on the Ballinrobe–Castlebar road.
- Mar. 15 W: IRA attempt ambush at Glospatrick, near Westport.
- Mar. 22 W: In the first IRA ambush at Carrowkennedy on an RIC patrol, on the Westport–Leenane road, RIC Sgt J. Coughlan is fatally wounded and Constables Maguire, Love and Creeden are wounded.
- Mar. 26 W: RIC reprisal in Westport for IRA's Carrowkennedy ambush.
- Mar. 29 E: IRA man James Mulrennan, wounded at Kilmovee.
E: RIC Constable William H. Stephens killed in Ballyhaunis.
- Apr. N: Easky RIC Barracks attacked.
- Apr. 1 E: IRA man Seán Corcoran killed at Crossard, Ballyhaunis, and Maurice Mullins arrested. IRA man Michael Coen killed at Lecarrow, Ballyhaunis.
- Apr. 3 E: Charlestown bank raid.
- Apr. 3 N: IRA attack a motor patrol at Bunnyconnellan, near Ballina and one RIC man is wounded.
- Apr. 3 N: RIC capture IRA ammunition dump near Ballina.
- Apr. 5 E: Two spies shot by the IRA at Loughglynn.
- Apr. 15 N: IRA ambush RIC patrol in Bridge Street, Ballina, wounding two RIC men. This is followed by RIC/Tan reprisals.
- Apr. 19 E: RIC raid in Loughglynn, where IRA men John Bergin and Stephen MacDermot are captured and executed, and Matt Kilcawley arrested.
- Apr. 23 W: IRA attack RIC motor patrol at Clogher – no casualties.
- May 3 S: IRA ambush RIC lorry at Tourmakeady, killing RIC Constables Christopher P. O'Regan, Herbert Oakes, William Power and John Regan, and wounding Lt

- Ibberson and two others. Adjutant Michael O'Brien and Scout Pádraig Feeney, IRA, are killed and Tom Maguire wounded.
- May 6 W: Big or High Wall ambush near Islandeady Dance Hall, where a high wall separates the road from the railway. Thomas O'Malley, and Thomas Lally of the IRA are killed and Frank O'Boyle and James MacNulty are wounded and captured.
- May 8 W: IRA attack a patrol at the Red (Railway) Bridge, Westport, wounding five RIC men.
- May 9 S: RIC Constable Thomas Hopkins on home leave is killed at Leface, Ballindine.
- May 17 E: Ballaghaderreen RIC Barracks attacked from train.
- May 18 W: RIC Sergeant Francis J. Butler killed in Newport and another RIC man wounded.
- May 19 W: IRA ambush RIC lorries at Kilmeena. John Collins, Seamus MacEvilly, Thomas O'Donnell and John Pat Staunton of the IRA are killed and Paddy Jordan is wounded and dies shortly afterwards. John Cannon, Paddy Mulloy, Thomas Nolan, Paddy O'Malley and John Pierce are captured. Constable Harry Beckett, RIC, is killed and Head Constable Potter wounded.
- May 22 E: Kilmovee RIC Barracks attacked by the IRA.
- May 23 W: Skerdagh engagement after retreat from Kilmeena. Constable Joseph Maguire, RIC, is killed and DI James Munro wounded; Jim Browne, IRA, is killed.
- May 23 N: Foxford Barracks attacked.
- May 24 N: RIC District Inspector White attacked in Ballina. General election provides a clean sweep for Sinn Féin candidates: N/W Mayo: J. Crowley, T. Derrig, J. MacBride, P. J. Ruttledge; S. Mayo/Roscommon: T. Maguire, H. Boland, W. Sears, D. O'Rourke; E. Mayo/Sligo: F. Ferran, T. O'Donnell, A. McCabe, S. Devins and F. Carty.
- May 25 N: At Bunree, near Ballina, IRA man James Howley (Enniscrone) is wounded and dies later.
- May 27 E: At Aghamore, Ballyhaunis, IRA man Paddy Boland is killed.
- June 1 W: Drummin RIC Barracks burned after evacuation.
- June 2 W: Second Carrowkennedy ambush. The IRA attack RIC patrol lorries, killing District Inspector Edward J. Stevenson, Sgt Francis Creegan, Constables Sydney Blythe, James Browne, John Doherty, Thomas Dowling and William French, and wounding four constables. There are no IRA casualties.
- June 2–July 11 W: Massive round-up by RIC/British Army after the Carrowkennedy ambush.
- June 16 E: Ballyhaunis RIC Barracks attacked by the IRA.
- June 22 N: Clydagh, Ballina. In an exchange of fire with the RIC Tom Nealon (Aughoose) is killed and Éamonn Gannon, O/C North Mayo IRA, Pat Bourke, Bartley Hegarty, Anthony Farrell, Tom Loftus and his father (all on the local IRA staff) are captured.
- July 1 N: IRA raid on Tuffy's Post Office in Culleens. In Glenesk RIC Constables Thomas Higgins and John King are captured and killed and two other RIC men are wounded, while two IRA men are killed.
- July 7 N: RIC Sgt Anthony Foody's body is found at Caralavin, near Bunnyconnellan with a note stating 'Revenge for O'Dwyer'.
- July 11 Truce between the IRA and British forces comes into effect.
- Aug./Sep. Four Western Divisions are formed. O/Cs are 1st: Michael Brennan, 2nd: Tom Maguire, 3rd: Liam Pilkington and 4th: Michael Kilroy.
- Sep./Oct. IRA training camps established in Ballycarran, Belmullet, Clydagh, Enniscrone, Nephin and Swinford.
- Oct. 5 W: Westport Workhouse taken over by the IRA.
- Dec. 6 Anglo-Irish Treaty signed. Westport meeting for the return of the IRA internees.

1922

(terms: FSA = Free State army; IRA = anti-Treaty Republicans)

- Jan. 7 Dáil Éireann approves the Treaty.
- Jan. 16 IRA raid an RIC barracks in Charlestown for guns; Sgt McGovern is wounded.
- Jan. 17 Swinford Barracks attacked by the IRA.
- Feb. 2 Ballinrobe and Claremorris Barracks taken over by the IRA.
- Feb. 14 Castlebar and Ballina Barracks taken over by the IRA.
- Mar. 4 Swinford Barracks taken over by the IRA.
- Mar. 8–10 Limerick stand-down: FSA troops under Michael Brennan retire, leaving the city in the hands of Ernie O'Malley's anti-Treaty troops.
- Spring Michael Collins sets up a rifle-swap plan to help arm the Catholic community in the North with guns not traceable back to the new southern authorities.
- Apr. 1 Castlebar pro-Treaty election rally, where Michael Collins is heckled by anti-Treaty supporters.
- Apr. 13 W: Joe Ring, FSA, arrested in Westport, then released by the IRA.
- Apr. 13 IRA take over the Four Courts in Dublin.
- Apr. 24 FSA General Adamson killed in Athlone.
- Apr. 30 FSA Comdt Simmons captured in Mayo. He is eventually released by Tom Maguire.
- June 16 General election held. In Mayo N/W, Mayo S/Rosc. S, and Mayo E/Sligo eight anti-Treaty and five pro-Treaty TDs are elected. Nationally eighty-two pro-Treaty and forty-six others are elected.
- June 28–30 Attack on and surrender of the Four Courts. This heralds the official start of the Civil War.
- June 29 E: IRA Capt. William Moran, O/C Bohola IRA, killed; Tom Ruane, FSA, of Kiltimagh fatally wounded.
- July 1 N: Boyle battle.
- July 2 N: Collooney, Co. Sligo, attacked by the IRA (led by F. Carty). Michael Dockery, FSA, is killed in Boyle.

- July 13 N: 'The Ballinalee', an FSA armoured car, is captured by the IRA.
- July 14 N: FSA sweep of the Ox Mountains.
- July 15 N: Collooney, Co. Sligo, surrendered by the IRA.
- July 23 E: Claremorris Barracks burned by the IRA.
- July 24 W: In Westport FSA forces led by Brigadier General Joe Ring land from the sea. Newport Barracks is destroyed by the IRA. At Glenhest, Newport, Tommy Heavey is captured.
- July 25 W: Castlebar taken by the FSA.
N: Ballina Barracks burned by the IRA.
- July 29 N: The FSA takes Ballina; the IRA withdraw to the Ox Mountains.
- Aug. 3 W: At Bracklagh, Newport, Sgt Lally and Pvt Deasy of the FSA are killed; Edward Hegarty, IRA, is also killed.
- Aug. 4 E: Swinford Barracks captured by the IRA.
- Aug. 7 E: Kiltimagh attacked.
- Aug. W: In early August Paddy Cannon is arrested.
- Aug. 11 E: At Kiltimagh thirty IRA men are arrested.
N: Near Ballina, ambush by the IRA.
- Aug. 16 W: Castlebar taken by the IRA.
- Aug. 21 W: IRA men Paddy Cannon, Tommy Heavey and Broddie Malone escape from Athlone Gaol.
- Aug. 22 Michael Collins is killed by the IRA in Cork.
- Aug. 23 S: At Brize House, Claremorris, Cannon, Heavey and Malone are recaptured.
- Aug. 25 E: Tom Carney and other IRA men are captured in Ballagherreen.
- Aug. W: In late August IRA man Battie Cryan is captured.
- Sep. 6 E: IRA James Vesey, Luke Taylor and Peter Donnelly are captured at Ballyhaunis-Kilkelly.
- Sep. 12 N: The IRA launch a successful attack at Ballina.
- Sep. 14 N: At Drumsheen, near Bunnyconnellan, Joe Ring, FSA, is killed and Tony Lawlor wounded.
- Sep. 15–16 N: Ambushes by the IRA at Belderg/Glenamoy.

- Sep. 20 N: Brian MacNeill and five others are executed by the FSA at Benbulbin, Co. Sligo.
- Sep. 21 S: Tuam taken by the IRA, who then withdraw.
- Sep. 22 W: Newport attacked by the IRA, who then withdraw.
- Sep. 24 W: Newport evacuated by the FSA.
- Oct. 2 E: In Ballaghaderreen a large IRA force of 140 men assembles.
- Oct. 3 The Provisional Government offers an amnesty to the IRA.
- Oct. 6 In Athlone, Patrick Mulrennan, IRA, is shot while in custody and dies of his wounds on 3 November.
- Oct. 10 S: Tom Maguire, IRA, captured.
- Oct. 10 The bishops' pastoral letter is issued. It is read on Sunday 22 of that month.
- Oct. 14 At Ballyheane, Comdt Mitchell of the FSA is killed, as is Seamus Mulrennan, IRA.
- Oct. 29 W: The IRA launch a successful attack on Clifden and Christie Macken is seriously wounded.
- Oct.–Nov. E: Johnny Grealy, IRA, captured in Aghamore.
- Nov. E: Tom Carney, IRA, escapes from Longford Gaol.
- Nov. 14 N: Four IRA men are captured at Markree Castle, Co. Sligo.
- Nov. 24 W: Newport attacked by the FSA; Michael Kilroy and other IRA men captured.
- Dec. 8 Execution of R. Barrett, J. McKelvey, L. Mellows and R. O'Connor in Dublin.
- Dec. 8 W: Paddy Duffy, IRA, captured in Islandeady.

1923

- Jan. 17 E: IRA attacks FSA patrol at Glore, near Kiltimagh.
- Feb. E: Tom Carney, IRA, wounded.
- Feb. 9 Liam Deasy, then in prison, gives a statement calling for a ceasefire by the IRA.
- Feb. 9–10 E: Claremorris: P. Burke (Knock), J. D. McCormack (Liskeavy), IRA, escape from imprisonment.

- Feb. 15 FSA captures IRA men Joyce, Donnelly and Heneghan at Castlecarra.
- Feb. 23 W: In Westport Pvt McQuaid, FSA assistant medical officer, is killed, and Capt. Togher, FSA O/C Westport, is wounded.
- Mar. 6 W: Paddy Duffy, T. Ruane, C. Gavan and J. Gibbons escape from Galway Gaol.
- Mar. 7 W: Joe Baker and thirteen other IRA men are captured at Shramore, Newport.
- Mar. 23–6 The IRA Executive meet in the Nire Valley, but no decision is made on a possible ceasefire.
- Apr. 6 W: In Dublin Tom Derrig (Westport) is wounded and arrested.
- Apr. 7 N: Nicholas Corcoran, IRA, is killed in Ballina.
- Apr. 8 S: Headford Barracks attacked by the IRA. FSA: McCarthy and Lyons killed; IRA: Dan McCormack is severely wounded and John Higgins killed.
- Apr. 10 IRA C/S Liam Lynch is killed in Tipperary.
- Apr. 11 S: Execution of six Republicans in Tuam as a reprisal for the IRA attack on the Headford Free State army post: Frank Cunnane, Martin Moylan, Seán Maguire, Michael Monaghan, John Newell and Séamus Ó Máille.
- Apr. 23 W: Battie Cryan, Paddy Cannon and Broddie Malone escape from the Curragh internment camp.
- Apr. 27 IRA C/S Frank Aiken calls for a ceasefire, to come into effect on 30 April.
- May 24 IRA C/S Aiken calls for an end to armed resistance and a Dump Arms to be effective from 28 May.
- May 24 W: In North Connemara senior staff of the 4th Western Division, including P. J. McDonnell, John Kilroy, Stephen Coyne and Jack Feehan, are captured.
- June 5 N: In Ballina, IRA man Joe Healy (Ardnaree) is killed.
- June 10 S: Tom Maguire and others escape from Athlone Gaol.
- Aug. 25 E: Tom Carney, IRA, is captured.
- Aug. 27 General election. In Mayo North and South four Sinn

Féin and five Cumann na nGaedheal TDs are elected.
Nationally Cumann na nGaedheal win 39 per cent of the
vote, Sinn Féin 28 per cent and other parties 23 per cent.

Sep. N: Matt Kilcawley is captured.

Oct. 12–Nov. 23 Republican prisoners start/end a general hunger
strike in jails across the country.

1924

Early Republican prisoners are released in stages.

July 16–17 The last, senior Republicans are released from Free
State internment camps.

INTRODUCTION

VINCENT KEANE

Those of us interested in the modern Irish revolutionary period, 1913–23, await each year the appearance of books containing new information on the topic. Too often we pick up a new publication and have to struggle through the initial sections detailing all the history that we are conversant with, such as unchanging versions of the founding of the Ulster Volunteers, the Irish Volunteers, the 1916 Rising and others. This publication is different. This is not a studious, well-structured book. Strictly speaking, this is also not a book by Ernie O'Malley. These are not his words, but he did do all the hard slog necessary for the birth of this publication, a book with a difference. A basic knowledge of Irish history from the Parnell Split of 1899 to the Sinn Féin election victory of December 1918 is necessary to understand why the IRA existed in 1918 and afterwards. What better place to get that knowledge but in Ernie O'Malley's *On Another Man's Wound*, which is a wonderful companion to this book.

We have here ten interviews with senior veterans from Mayo of the revolutionary years in Ireland. Mostly there is a narrow focus of six years of reminiscences, from 1919 and the setting-up of Dáil Éireann to 1924 and the release of the Civil War internees. Some of those interviewed go back further, taking in the local events of the 1916 Rising, but these are few.

Ernie O'Malley conducted the interviews in the early 1950s when those relating their stories were getting on in age and memories were failing. It must have taken tremendous patience on the part of O'Malley to get all this history together. Consider how he had to locate the people to interview. In those days

without telephones it was difficult to track people down, but on many occasions a former interviewee accompanied him for the introduction, for though he was a respected name, with an established anti-Treaty record, he had never actually fought in the west and thus was not known personally to the men.

The Irish government decided in 1947 that it was an appropriate time in the country's history to approach the participants of the Irish revolutionary period for their personal witness statements of their involvement in the various organisations that existed in the period, e.g. Sinn Féin, the Irish Volunteers, the Irish Citizen Army, Na Fianna Éireann and Cumann na mBan. The timing was appropriate because a certain unity had been achieved in Ireland during the Emergency between 1939 and 1945. Thousands of Civil War opponents had put aside their differences and had joined the Irish Army or one of the various voluntary organisations, e.g. the Local Defence Force, the Local Security Force, Auxiliary Fire Brigades and the Red Cross. With this unity in mind, the government set up the Bureau of Military History at Westland Row in Dublin. People could go to the offices of the Bureau and make their witness statements to an army officer. If they were unable, or unwilling, they could submit a written statement to the Bureau. These statements have lately become available to the public.

However, some men, such as General Tom Barry, refused to make a statement to the Bureau. Barry's view was that the people going to the Bureau were making statements that were not verified or corroborated by their senior officers and that a person could say anything about any event, or about any person, and it was accepted by the Bureau. Due to the limitations of space, only ten of O'Malley's twenty-eight Mayo interviews are included here and only four of the men who gave them also went to the Bureau.

O'Malley's technique was quite different, so keep this in

mind as you read these interviews. He would make contact with an IRA veteran and the interview would normally take place in the person's home. His approach was dissimilar to that of the Bureau: it was all very relaxed and it was Ernie doing the writing, not taking written statements. Often, the person being interviewed would stray away from the subject in hand and that is obvious in the various narratives. But that's the nature of oral history; they were not making formal statements. So this collection is not intended to be a well-structured and complete history of the revolutionary period in Mayo.

The 1916 Rising passed by without Mayo knowing too much about it. It was wartime, newspapers were scarce and there was harsh censorship. News of the fighting in Dublin came via the railway workers whose work connected them with the capital and the west. It was a train driver who brought the news of John MacBride's execution to Westport some days after the event. The west was cut off from information and the Irish Volunteers' headquarters did not deem Mayo important enough to notify about the coming Rising. However, the RIC realised that there were determined Republicans in the county, with strong Fenian traditions, people who would eventually strike at the British establishment. This prompted them to round up and send these prospective troublemakers for internment after Easter 1916. In doing this the establishment made a huge mistake, as the interned men became more learned and determined in their efforts to work for an Ireland free of domination by its nearest neighbour.

Post-1916 a great wave of nationalism spread across the country. The various Republican organisations had a rebirth and the shackles of the Irish Parliamentary Party were loosened and finally cast aside, as witnessed in the 1918 general election. A new order was in the offing and young Republicans were no longer being cowed by the establishment, the police and the

clergy. New, youthful leaders were coming to the fore and the jails were filling with those who were rejecting all the old symbols of imperialism. The heavy-handed methods of the RIC and military were to be met head-on with armed resistance, a resistance backed by the newly formed Dáil Éireann representing the majority in the country.

The old Irish Volunteer structures were revamped in 1917 and new, prison-hardened men were appointed to the headquarters staff. After the formation of the Dáil the very name Irish Volunteers was dropped, and it became the Irish Republican Army. Great strides were made and companies of the IRA sprang up all over the country. In 1920 new structures had to be organised to accommodate this new army. The old Mayo Brigade, which was inactive and functioned more as a committee that rarely met, was revamped and in 1920 four new brigades came from it. GHQ had a firm hand on the organisation and a proper chain of command and responsibility emerged in 1920.

Many in the RIC recognised what was happening and resigned. The force was much depleted and recruits, mostly battle-hardened ex-British Army men from Britain and across the Empire, including some Mayo men, were joining up. These new recruits, the 'Tans', gave the impression of ruthlessness and indiscipline, but they were members of the RIC and under the control of RIC sergeants, head constables and district inspectors, who led them on terror raids, assaulting their way across the land, as witnessed at Tiernaur, Cuilmore and countless other locations. The RIC was the front line of the Empire in Ireland, and it was creating the conditions whereby armed resistance was inevitable. Instead of being referred to as the Tan War, the conflict should be known as the RIC War.

Officially, the War of Independence was played out between 1919 and 1921. In the Mayo brigades the main actions mostly

took place in the early months of 1921, in locations such as Kilmeena, Tourmakeady and Carrowkennedy. We now know that by the time of the Carrowkennedy ambush in June 1921, Truce talks were going on between Irish and British representatives. We are familiar with the numerous events across the country that forced the British government to the negotiating table in 1921. Did we win? Did the British forces win? Or, was it a stalemate, a draw? The situation was left in such an unresolved state that it was inevitable that at some future date young men would again resort to force of arms.

One thing missing from these interviews is any recognition of the tremendous work undertaken by the women of Cumann na mBan and the youth of Na Fianna Éireann. The women played an equal part in the national struggle and without their aid in carrying arms and dispatches, providing food and shelter, and generally giving full backing to the men, it would have been impossible to carry on. Armed columns of men would descend on a townland after a long night waiting to confront the enemy. Many miles would have been travelled and the column, often numbering sixty men (see Michael Kilroy's interview) would be seeking hot food and places to sleep. The women came up trumps and everyone would be catered for. While the men ate and rested, the women were on full alert.

Na Fianna Éireann, the Irish National Boy Scouts, had been in existence since 1909. When the Irish Volunteers were founded in 1913, the Fianna officers provided a cadre of young men experienced at foot drill, handling weapons, first aid, camping, etc. Boys like Liam Mellows, Seán Heuston, Con Colbert and a host of others were the nucleus of the Irish Volunteers and later the IRA. Where there was a good Sluagh (branch) of Na Fianna, a strong company of the IRA followed. All the underground departments of Dáil Éireann in Dublin had Fianna officers as clerks and dispatch riders. In the group

photograph of the West Mayo Brigade ASU (flying column), at least twelve of the men started their Republican careers in Na Fianna Éireann in Westport.

After one year of relative peace, July 1921 to June 1922, the pro- and anti-Treaty sides faced each other in arms at the Four Courts in Dublin. The IRA was outgunned by a Free State army of 55,000 troops armed by the British, who also facilitated the Free State government by disbanding the Munster Fusiliers, the Dublin Fusiliers, the Leinsters and the Connaught Rangers so that they could enlist in the Free State army. It is now estimated that 16,000 Republicans were interned from 1922 to 1924. Brian O'Higgins, Sinn Féin TD, author and poet, related how at least 150 IRA men were killed on lonely country roads and city streets during this period. Can we ever forget the seventy-seven executed against prison walls?

This book is an ideal companion to the two already published on Kerry and Galway. It will give you hours of reading.

WEST MAYO

MICHAEL KILROY

(UCDA 17b/101, pp. 39–60; 136, pp. 42–44; and 138, pp. 11–14)¹

Michael Kilroy (1884–1962) was born in Derryloughan, near Newport, but raised in Carrickaneady, also close to Newport. He attended Cuilmore and later Newport national school. He was apprenticed as a carpenter in Claremorris but became a blacksmith and started his forge in Newport in 1905. He joined the Irish Volunteers in Newport and became O/C of the Newport Company and later the Newport Battalion. Initially he was quartermaster of the West Mayo Brigade, then in August 1920 he became vice-commandant. He was later appointed commandant of the brigade's flying column or ASU. He was appointed O/C of the 4th Western Division upon its creation in August or September 1921. During the



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Leonard)*

1 Initial transcriptions were prepared by Frances-Mary Blake and Dominic Price, and additional corrections and footnotes have been added. This interview was carried out in three sessions and appears in three separate volumes (101, 136 and 138) of the Ernie O'Malley Military Notebooks. The three have now been integrated in chronological order with the volume number appearing before the page number, e.g. [101/39R]. Kilroy made a statement to the Bureau of Military History – WS 1162.