



O'Malley Clan Association Monthly Newsletter

- O'Malley called up to Irish squad
- Get in touch and share your stories!
- Blasket Encounter, Eugene O'Malley
- About the O'Malley Clan Association
- The O'Malley Clan Rally 2018, Programme of Events

O'Malley Called up to Irish Squad

Martin O'Neill announced his newest 40 man Republic of Ireland squad for the upcoming games in Scotland, and in Dublin, against France and the USA last week.

One notable inclusion in the squad, for the first time, is Peterborough United's Conor O'Malley. The goal-keeper, from Westport, who has previously played with Westport Utd, Mervue Utd, Salthill Devon, Shamrock Rovers, and before moving to England, with St Patrick's Athletic in the League of Ireland, is 23 years old and has studied Mathematics at NUI Maynooth.



All of us here at the O'Malley Clan Association wish him the best of luck for the future with Peterborough United and Ireland !!



Get in touch and share your O'Malley Heritage!

Have you got an article or old photographs that you'd like to submit for future editions of "O Maille" The O'Malley Clan Association Newsletter.

We'd love to hear from you wherever you're based around the world. Old photographs and stories to go with them, old letters, family trees or just an arti-

cle that you'd like to share with the rest of the clan. Drop us a line and We'll get right to it!



Blasket Encounter—Eugene O'Malley

On Easter Monday morning, April 12th 1982, we weighed anchor at Portmagee harbour and set sail for the Blasket Islands, some 20 miles to the north. We were a group of six friends from Cork on a cruising holiday on the southwest coast. Our boat was a 36 foot ketch, chartered in Bantry where we had departed from the previous day. The day was glorious. The sea was slight, and the breeze was a gentle force 3 on the beam.

We reached the Blasket archipelago shortly after noon and spent a few delectable hours sailing amongst the islands. On approaching Inishvickillane island we were hailed from the cliff top and invited ashore "for tea" by the owner, Charles Haughey, who was spending his Easter vacation on the island. We anchored in eight fathoms in the bight at the north side of the island and proceeded ashore in the dinghy. It was late evening when we disengaged from the very welcome, if unexpected, hospitality afforded us on Inishvickillane. As we made our way back to the anchorage I noted that the wind had dropped to nothing. It wasn't just a local condition as I could see smoke from gorse fires in the distance on the mainland rising vertically. The sea was now calm as a millpond. Our original intention had been to press on to Dingle. Now, given the very rare set of circumstances which would permit a comfortable anchorage in the Blaskets, we decided to forego the fleshpots of Dingle and stay put for the night. I was delighted. It had been an ambition of mine to spend a night in what the 'South and West' cruising guide describes as the "loneliest anchorage in the world". We discussed the events of the day and the plans for the morrow over a very pleasant meal and turned in.

About 2 a.m. I awoke to hear a strange, mournful, eerie, wailing' sound. The piteous moans reverberated like they were emanating from a vast echo chamber. It was surreal. I had just awakened from a deep sleep and I was struggling to make sense of what I was hearing. I knew that I had never heard anything like this at sea before, but somehow there was something vaguely familiar about the sounds. I racked my brains. Then it came to me. I was listening to the song of a Humpback whale. Some years previously National Geographic magazine published an article by zoologist Roger Payne on the singing habits of the Humpback. The magazine had supplied a sound record of some of Roger's Humpback whale song recording. I had idly played this record a few times, prompted more by curiosity than any particular interest in the subject. Then I had forgotten all about it, until now. At this stage I had to convince myself that I was actually awake and not dreaming, or hearing Charles' "tea". I awakened Vivienne, one of the crew and together we listened, enthralled, to this symphony of the deep for the best part of half an hour. The remainder of our cruise passed off very pleasantly, but my experience that night triggered a whole series of questions. I wondered how I could have heard underwater



sounds at all. I was aware from my reading of the Blasket literature of the "fairy music" of Inishvickillane. Could there be a possible connection? This fairy music was supposed to be the inspiration of a traditional air "Port na bPucal", literally translated "the ghostly tune". I had never heard the tune. When I did hear it, would it bear any resemblance to the sounds I heard that night? I re-read Roger Payne's article and anything else I could lay my hands on regarding the subject. Lo, it transpired that, yes, underwater sounds could be transmitted through the hull of a boat. In fact, in the era of the sailing ships, before engines, sailors were well accustomed to hearing the sounds of whales and dolphins through the hulls of their ships.

I turned my attention now to the literature and the legends. Robin Flower, an English scholar who developed a deep affinity with the Blasket Islanders during the early part of this century wrote of his experiences in his book "The Western Island". In it he relates one story of the origin of Port na bPucal.

In the old days, when the island was inhabited, a man sat alone one night in his house, soothing his loneliness with a fiddle. He was playing, no doubt, the favourite music of the countryside, jigs and reels and hornpipes, the hurrying tunes that would put light heels on the feet of the dead. But, as he played, he heard another music without, going over the roof in the air. It passed away to the cliffs and returned again, and so backwards and forwards again and again, a wandering air wailing in repeated phrases, till at last it had become familiar in his mind, and he took up the fallen bow, and drawing it across the strings followed note by note the lamenting voices as they passed above him. Ever since, that tune, port na bpucai, "the fairy music", has remained with his family, skilled musicians all, and, if you hear it played by a fiddler of that race, you will know the secret of Inisicileain.

I had difficulty reconciling the legend with my own experience. Inisvickillane is a high island and I could not explain how underwater sounds, however intense, could be heard so far above the surface of the sea. The search continued. In the music section of Cork city library I located an L.P. by traditional fiddler Tommy Peoples which featured Port na bPucal. As I listened to Tommy's unaccompanied plaintive rendition of the tune I heard, with excitement, familiar twists and phrases in the music which were evocative of the Payne recordings and what I had recalled hearing myself in the Blaskets. But now I made an unexpected discovery. The sleeve notes on Tommy Peoples L.P. had a piece written by Tony McMahon, himself a noted traditional musician, which gave a different version of the Port na bPucal legend.

Tony's version puts three Inishvickillane men in a currach returning home from a ceili on the Great Blasket Island. It was a calm moonlit night. While at sea they heard the strange music. One of the three was a fiddler and he played along with the music thereby absorbing the tune. I was now quite excited. This version of the legend was compatible with my own experience. It was a boat at sea. The currach would have been approaching the landing place near where we were anchored. Their night was calm as was ours. For a traditional musician to pick up a strange tune by ear would not be considered extraordinary. It was then and still remains the normal method of passing on traditional music.

I have discussed my experience with authorities on traditional music. I learnt that Sean O'Riada was intrigued by the tune and sought to determine its origins but without coming to any conclusion. In relating my story I detected a slight resentment at the explaining away of a legend. This is a pity. I know that it is a lovely concept that such a wonderful tune might have come to us from the parallel supernatural world of the fairies.

I think that it is no less lovely a concept that this tune might also have come from the parallel natural community of the oceans - the great whales.

An article kindly submitted by Eugene O'Malley, of Tivoli, in Cork, originally published in the newsletter of The Irish Whale & Dolphin Group in April 1992



The O'Malley Clan Association
Mary Jane O'Malley (Hon Sec)
2 Main Street
Newport
Co. Mayo
Ireland

Email: omalleyclanireland@gmail.com

Website: www.omalleyclan.ie



find us on
Facebook

www.facebook.com/omalleyclan



@clanomalley

The O'Malley Clan Association aims to reach out to O'Malleys from all around the world and foster links between the O'Malleys around the globe and the clan at home here in Ireland.

The Clan Association formed in 1953 has been connecting O'Malleys around the world in The US and Canada, Britain, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, South America, and anywhere else you can think of for over 60 years now.

We hope with our new website, and newsletter, that We can go from strength to strength in our aim to connect all the O'Malleys around the world.

The Annual Clan Rally 22nd June to 24th June 2018, Westport

VENUE / TIME	WELCOME TO WESTPORT
FRIDAY JUNE 22ND 2018 4:00PM WESTPORT TOWN HALL	WESTPORT WALKING TOURS A one hour tour of the main streets and alleys of Westport with Stephen Clarke detailing the facts and history of the town.
7:00PM WESTPORT HOUSE	CHIEFTAINS RECEPTION AND HISTORICAL TALK BY ANNE CHAMBERS Join us in Westport House for an evening of music and drinks followed by a talk by Anne Chambers on Grace O'Malley and her family.

VENUE / TIME	DAY TOURS AND ENTERTAINMENT
SATURDAY JUNE 23RD 2018 10:30AM WESTPORT TOWN HALL	CASTLES AND ABBEYS TOUR Brónach Joyce of The Clew Bay Heritage Centre invites you to join her on a bus tour to visit Castles and Abbeys in the Clew Bay area.
4:30PM WESTPORT TOWN HALL	THE WESTPORT STORY A dramatic tour of Westport led by two actors who play various historic characters of significance to Westport - including Grace O'Malley.
8:00PM WESTPORT TOWN HALL	FÉILE CUAN MÓDH An evening of traditional and contemporary Irish Music featuring the best of local musicians, dancers and a short drama from "Matriarchs" by Anne Chambers on the meeting in 1593 of Gráinne Mhaol and Queen Elizabeth I.
10:30PM MILL TIMES HOTEL	CRAIC AGUS CEOIL Finish the night off with some finger food, craic agus ceoil at the Mill Times Hotel.

VENUE / TIME	FAMILY FESTIVAL
SUNDAY JUNE 24TH 2018 12:00PM MURRISK ABBEY	MASS AT THE ABBEY Murrisk Abbey has strong connections to the O'Malley Clan. The mass will be preceded by a procession from the Famine monument led by The Clew Bay Pipers.
2:00PM WESTPORT HOUSE	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING All Clan Members are welcome to attend and share any ideas.
2:30PM GRACY'S WESTPORT HOUSE	FAMILY DAY AND BARBEQUE AT GRACY'S Join us at Gracy's Restaurant on the grounds of Westport House for a barbeque and a special pass to Westport House and Pirate Adventure Park. Afterwards we wrap up the festivities with some live music, the Chieftains Speech and a ceremony based on Clan tradition the investiture of the 2019 Chieftain.

**RECOMMENDATION FOR ACCOMODATION:
SPECIAL RATES ARE AVAILABLE FOR ACCOMODATION VIA
DESTINATION WESTPORT**