

## Rising from the ashes of the Four Courts!

'The yard was littered with chunks of masonry and smouldering records; pieces of white paper were gyrating in the upper air like seagulls... Fire was fascinating to watch; it had a spell like running water.'

These words come from the patriot Ernie O'Malley's compelling account of his Civil War experiences, 'The Singing Flame', belatedly published in 1978. The date of the fire was June 30, 1922, and the pieces of white paper "gyrating in the upper air like seagulls", described by O'Malley, were chunks of Ireland's long history - some dating to just years after the Norman invasion in the 12th century.



Eminent historian and writer Tom Garvin later described the burning of the Public Records Office in the Four Courts in 1922 as an "example of intellectual and cultural vandalism".

Garvin, and most historians, blamed the anti-treaty IRA - though most of those involved avoided culpability as best they could during their lives. They countered it was more likely done by Irish Free State army shells fired from borrowed British guns.

O'Malley had been one of the commanders of an anti-treaty IRA group who had occupied the Four Courts in Dublin from April to June 1922. The new Free State government was reluctant to move against the occupiers, basically to avoid the impending Civil War.

In late June 1922, the murder of a senior military figure in London, blamed on the anti-treaty IRA, led to the UK giving Michael Collins an ultimatum. When the Four Courts group refused to surrender, the shelling began, continuing for two days, followed by an all-out Free State attack, which led to defeat and surrender.

But just before the surrender, at 3.30pm, on June 30, 1922, the occupiers mined an older section of the building that contained the priceless documents spanning 700 years of Ireland's story. There was huge loss of life and destruction to surrounding property - and the incident became known as the start date of the tragic and murderous Civil War.

The loss of the priceless archive material did not pass





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unnoticed. O'Malley imagined the flying pieces of paper were notes of British money paid to Irish informers. But it was only as the decades wore on that historians came to know the full extent of the loss which they deemed irreplaceable.

But more happily it has now transpired that all is not lost - and a great deal can be retrieved from the bitter ashes of long ago. We learned yesterday that it can happen via an amalgam of officials'

obsession with duplicates and even triplicates of documents stored in different places that goes back to the dawn of time; centuries of historians lovingly copying such documents; and a new high-tech approach to tracking, storing and displaying such historic documents.

Thus, very many of those records deemed lost following the fire at the Four Courts in 1922 are to be recreated through virtual reality, under a new scheme announced by Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and Culture Minister Josepha Madigan.

The project is dubbed 'Beyond 2022, Ireland's Virtual Record Treasury'. It's a big collaborative project led by Trinity College Dublin in partnership with the National Archives of Ireland, the National Archives UK, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and the Irish Manuscripts Commission. There will be a Dublin Government grant of some €2.5m.


An all-singing, all-dancing three-dimensional virtual reality model of the digitally reconstructed Public Record Office of Ireland will be launched in June 2022 to mark the centenary of the fateful fire. The documents will be a huge resource to historians, professional and amateur alike. They will be a boon to family tree makers and a bulwark against "bad history".




## Preliminary Programme for the 2020 Annual Gathering

26 – 28<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2020

CHIEFTAN TOM O'MALLEY  
AND THE O'MALLEY CLAN ASSOCIATION INVITES YOU TO





**PRELIMINARY PROGRAMME OF EVENTS**

<b>Friday</b>	<b>Launch, Hotel Newport</b>
4:00pm	Historical Talk & Walking Tour in Newport Half an hour walking tour around Newport with local historian Peter Maloney detailing the role of the O'Malleys in local history.
4:30pm	Screening of 'The Peacemaker' <i>An award winning documentary directed by James Demo about Irish peacemaker Padraig O'Malley who had a prominent role in the Northern Ireland Peace Process. He was born in Dublin and has family in Kilmeena and Newport area.</i>
6:00pm	Chieftain's Reception and talk by Professor Padraig O'Malley (John Joseph Moalkey Distinguished Professor of Peace and Reconciliation, University of Massachusetts, Boston) Join us for an evening of music and drinks followed by a talk by the internationally recognized peacemaker Padraig O'Malley. Mary Madec (Mary O'Malley, Newport) will read poems from her latest book 'The Egret Lands With News From Other Parts'.
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Day Tours and Entertainment</b>
10:00am	Traditional guided bus tour of local sites of historical interest to the Clan
7:00pm	Ceiliúradh Uí Mhaille, Nevins Newfield Inn Tiernaur <i>An evening of food, music session, folk and traditional with Céilí and set dancing</i>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Celebration Lunch And Inauguration</b>
10:00am	Mass St Patricks Church Barrack Hill View the 'Last Judgement' East Window by Harry Clarke renowned Irish stained glass artist
2:00 pm	Lunch Hotel Newport Join us for the traditional lunch followed by Awards Ceremony and Investiture of the new Chieftain

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@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 O'Malley Clan DNA Project on Family Tree DNA

The most common queries we get at The O'Malley Clan Association are queries in relation to helping to trace peoples ancestors in Ireland. As we all know, written records can only take us so far, (if you're lucky you'll get back to the early 1800's or late 1700's).

Many of the Irish Census Records and other historic documents were destroyed during the early part of the 20th century and as a result it can be very hard to trace ancestors back beyond the 19th century. Church records are a help, but can be patchy at times.

One way of narrowing down the search is through DNA testing. The O'Malley Clan Association is involved in a project with Family Tree DNA to test as many O'Malleys as possible to try and expand our knowledge of our roots as much as we possibly can.

There's a specific page for the project on the Family Tree DNA website:

<https://www.familytreedna.com/groups/omalley/about>

Check it out, there's lots of info there, and administrators also for any questions.

