

History of the Mayo Association, Dublin.

By John Garavin



The Formative Years

Any attempt to identify the factors that have established Muintir Mhaigh Eo personnel in Dublin since the Association was founded in 1905 is not an easy one. Neither fact nor reason can explain how our Association has stood the test of time. In this year of 2005, the Association has reached its centenary.

It is a significant milestone in the history of any Association and it is fitting that the achievements, the personnel, the officers and ordinary members and supporters should be recognised and the contribution of so many people should be celebrated in a fitting way.

The Mayo Association, Dublin was originally known as the 'Mayo Men's Association.' For obvious reasons, that title is now history. It is now proudly known as the Mayo Persons Association, or, more commonly, the Mayo Association.

Mayo is a large barren county. Arable land constitutes a very small portion of its acreage. Being constantly battered by the Atlantic Ocean from Killala to Clew Bay and Killary, it boasts a delightful, jagged coastline. Now probably the jewel in the crown of Ireland's coastal counties, for both the present Mayo residents and those who have had to make a living elsewhere, there is a strong attachment to their place of birth.

In the early 1900s life was not kind to Mayo's inhabitants. Being born 150 to

200 miles from the capital city of our country left an enormous amount of time and space between the local parliamentarians and the Government officials of the time, who either resided at Dublin Castle, Bank of Ireland, Dame Street, or, of course, in the house of Commons in London.

In researching the early days of the Mayo Association and the people responsible for bringing the body into being, it is important to understand something of the history and conditions of the time.

Most people know of and have read about the Great Hunger of 1845-1848 and of the terrible consequences of that tragedy. We know how those who survived eked out a living from the land. If strength of will or mind were ever a necessity then it must surely have been in the aftermath of such an awful catastrophe and those unforgettable scenes of famine, despair, emigration and death.

Being a colony of the British Empire during the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, we relied greatly on the British administration for sustenance. World power countries demanded a lot from their colonies and Mayo and Ireland suffered hugely in terms of loss of life and human degradation. There were many fatalities from a very high infant mortality rate. The life expectancy threshold meant that a fifty year old was considered an old man. Many Mayo people emigrated in the late 1800s and early 1900s to the USA. These were extremely hazardous journeys with many succumbing to the hardships and perils of the voyages.

Great Britain was another popular destination for those seeking work and, to a lesser, extent, Dublin received her share of Mayo people who left their native place but did not go abroad. Of course there were tremendous scenes of sadness with each departure. Every house in Mayo had a 'wake' on the eve of a son or daughter going to the USA.

In those days the 'wake' was recognized as probably the last time the parents of those taking the boat would ever see their offspring. A hundred years later, in an era of almost instant communication, it is hard to imagine what time, travel and communications were like then.

As is known and well documented, Mayo societies were set up in the 1800s in many cities on the eastern seaboard of America. Indeed, they are still there to this day and in many other cities in other countries around the world. The Dublin Branch of the Mayo Association was established by two great sons of Mayo- Major John MacBride from Westport and Mr. Edward Lavelle from near Balla. They were joined at an early stage by

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Paddy O'Beirne who was to become a prominent businessman in the capital.

The purpose of the organisation was to help Mayo people and enable them establish their presence and identity in the capital city of Ireland. Research shows that the people involved in the infant years of the Mayo Association in Dublin were of a high calibre. Some had an innate talent for leadership in the business world, others had civil and legal acumen while many, men and women, were part of the established services of the state.

This earlier period of the Mayo Association in Dublin suggests that the members were of a somewhat 'conservative' nature, a trait that would not be unusual given their background. The membership of the Association, initially, was quite small.

Reading through the names and occupations of the first Mayo Association Committee (1905) they all come across as people with a strong political and nationalist outlook. A strong inherent attachment to their native place was the cornerstone of that first Association.

There must have been a motivating factor to keep the association alive and active! Why did this group of people come together to formulate such an association? What was their goal?

With hindsight we are now in a better position to identify the many needs and reasons for such a strong and active organization. In the earlier part of the last (20th) century an annual visit by Mayo people living in Dublin to their native place was the exception rather than the norm. A return visit to one's town was often to attend the burial of a parent of close relative.

A holiday, never mind a holiday with pay, was not part of the vocabulary of the time. It would be decades before these luxuries became a basic right. As a result there were only occasional visits home by the Mayo migrants who were now settled in Dublin. This physical separation resulted in the growth of an enormous emotional attachment to Mayo. Indeed the scenes of mothers and fathers waving goodbye to heartbroken offspring as they left their local train station in turf-driven locomotives has been well illustrated by artists from all parts of Ireland. Many of those railway stations are now nothing more than a broken-down junction of steel boxes, but if they could talk, oh! what a story they could tell. A journey from Mayo to Dublin in the early 1900s took longer than a present day journey to Los Angeles.

In view of these emotional factors and the additional problems related to travel and time, one can imagine the need migrants would have felt to form an association or alliance with fellow natives in their adopted city, so as to keep in touch with their homeland.

I have no doubt that these people were both mentally and physically robust. Indeed most parents raised large families as was the norm in those times. This aspect of life led families to be survivors in circumstances that were often less than comfortable.

It is well known that Grainne Uaile visited the Queen of England some four hundred years ago. That surely was an indication, if one were needed, of the status of this legendary pirate queen and the importance that Mayo had gained, through her, in the history of relations between the two countries.

Many years later, in 1993, our President and the Mayo Person of the year for 1989, Mary Robinson also paid a private visit to the Queen of England. It is safe to assume that the matters for conversation were very much different. Nevertheless these are occasions that are part of the history of Mayo people and they will remain with us to the end of time.

However, I am a believer in the saying that ‘what is said, is bred in the marrow, is bred in the bone.’ Thus, we are the product of a rural and religious background with a very stable foundation which instilled in us hearts of granite received through magnificent parenting by caring, careful and even complex families. We are linked in a chain of togetherness which contributes as much mystery and mystique as it does association and togetherness.

The McBride Connection.

Little enough is known of Major John McBride’s connection or the extent of his involvement in the affairs of the Association. It is known that he was the first President and reports suggest that he was also a major subscriber to the funds of the Association in those early days.

In 1905 McBride had just returned to Ireland from Paris. He had gone through a troublesome divorce from his wife, Maud Gonne. The poet, William Butler Yeats, an admirer and friend of Maud Gonne was quick to hail Maud Gonne as the “victim” in the marriage and famously painted a crude picture of McBride as a “lout” who was unworthy of his wife.

The soldier who had gained an international reputation because of his part in raising an Irish Brigade to fight on the side of the Boers against the British forces in The Transvaal and Natal had come a long way from his somewhat humble origins in Westport. He was born in Westport on the 7th May 1865. His father Patrick was a native of Antrim and came to Westport in the late 1850s where he set up as a merchant. John was the youngest son and his father died of typhus a short time after his birth

(Another son, Joseph, was among a group of Westport men rounded up and arrested in and around Westport before being imprisoned in Castlebar jail once news of the Rising reached the West. Joseph McBride was later to become the first Sinn Fein deputy for West Mayo in 1918).

John McBride attended school with the Christian Brothers in the town. He studied medicine for a short time in Dublin before taking a job with Hugh Moore, a firm of chemists. He also displayed his nationalist tendencies and joined the IRB.

McBride emigrated to London and went from there to South Africa. When the (second) Boer War started in 1899, he helped raise an Irish Brigade and rose to the position of second-in-command with the rank of major.

When Michael Davitt resigned his Mayo seat in the British House of Commons in 1900, in protest against the Boer War, some friends in Westport and Arthur Griffith nominated John McBride, then fighting in the Boer War, as a candidate in the by-election. The United Irish League nominated John O'Donnell, who easily won the seat.

After the (Boer) war, he went to Paris where he married Maud Gonne on the 21st February 1903. It was an ill-fated union and did not last long. After the divorce and his return to Dublin, McBride worked for Dublin Corporation and renewed his involvement with the revolutionary movement.

His commitment to IRB activities would have left little time for involvement in the Mayo Association, but there is little doubt McBride retained an attachment for his home place.

In a letter written in Nov 1912 to his cousin, Joe who lived on Islandmore in Clew Bay, he makes fond reference to enjoying a quantity of oysters and stout, and also gives a hint, perhaps a premonition, of what was in store for him when he wrote "Glad to hear you all liked my remarks. A man can only die once and I want to let the English dogs know what I think about them before I depart this place."

8 Spencer Hill,
Dublin Rd.
London SW 9. 11. 12
Dear Joe
Many thanks
for the oysters which
arrived safely
yesterday afternoon.
It was very good
of you to send them
and you must not
think of sending
any more as I don't
want to be responsible

for eating up all the
oysters in Clew Bay.
We had a royal
feast last night &
praised the health of
Islandmore in bottles.
Glad to hear you
all liked my oysters.
A man can only die once
& I must let the
English dogs know
what I think about
them before I depart
in peace.
This will be a

brag month with me.
I had an invitation to
speak in Liverpool
but could not accept
it this year.
Glad to hear your
father mother well
on the Island as ever
Best of wishes to
everyone
Yours affectionately
John McBride

Previously unpublished correspondence from Major John McBride to a cousin Joe on Islandmore in Clew Bay.

He was with Thomas MacDonagh on Easter Monday 1916, and was second in command in Jacob's biscuit factory during the Rising. He was captured after the rising, court-martialled, sentenced to death, and executed in Kilmainham Jail, on 5th May 1916.

He was buried in Arbour Hill, Dublin. On 4 August 1963, Eamonn de Valera unveiled a plaque on the house at the Quay in Westport in which John McBride was born.

Ned Lavelle.

While McBride clearly was an influential figure to have associated with the formation of the Mayo association in 1905, it does not appear as if he played any considerable role in maintaining the organisation as a viable thriving entity.

That chore fell to another of the founders, Ned Lavelle. Lavelle became the father figure of Mayo people in Dublin and remained committed to the organisation he founded right up to the time of his death almost sixty years later.

Ned Lavelle, the association's first and long serving President, was born in Belcarra. His family owned a shop in Balla where he got his first job.

As a young man he developed a keen interest in amateur drama and was involved with a local group which won an All-Ireland title that earned the group a week long run in the

Gaiety theatre.

He retained his love of drama long after he migrated to Dublin and his affair with the theatre ensured that the Mayomens Association would also be a focus for his interest in the stage.

He was a successful businessman as well as working as a commercial traveller for Clerys. He was an agent for Western Hats and also had an involvement with the Greenmount Linen Company. He was a lifelong member of the Catholic Commercial Club in O'Connell Street.

By all accounts he was a true gentleman. Though not very tall he was a big man who was always well groomed and he had a great sense of humour.

He never married and his bachelor status allowed him the time to devote to the Mayo Association, to following football and, in later years, indulging his passion for golf. As well as playing he was involved with William O'Grady in starting a golf club in Balla.

He was also a prolific writer of verse and used his pen to recount exploits on the golf course or to extol the beauties of Mayo, or whatever subject took his fancy. One of his proudest moments came in 1963 when, as representative of the Mayo association, he was invited to an official function in Dublin to meet Princess Grace on her first state visit to Ireland.

He died shortly afterwards at the age of eighty-five. He is buried in Castlebar Old Cemetery.

The Two World Wars.

Having come through World Wars I and II and having been deprived of the limited imports we had received from the U.K., we had now become accustomed to living a life on rations and coupons. These were extraordinary hardships which the people of Mayo and indeed most parts of Ireland lived through in the 1930 and through to the 1950s.

In the midst of the first World War and in the years immediately afterwards, Ireland had both a revolution and a civil war. An unfortunate set of circumstances remained for years afterwards. At this point in the Mayo Association, the early decades of the last century,

some of our members were notably involved in the political issues of the time.

Apart from the first President, Major John MacBride, there was also Frank and Jack Shouldice from Ballyhaunis. Jack Shouldice fought in the G.P.O during Easter Week 1916 and Frank Shouldice fought in the East Wall Garrison. Their sister was also involved in the G.P.O. Other notable members of the Association at this time were:

Ned Lavelle, Balla W.V. O'Doherty, Charlestown the second President of the Association

M.J. Cassidy, Charlestown, second Treasurer

Dr. Loftus, Attymass, Ballina, father of Sean "Dublin Bay" Loftus

Chief Supt Dick Creagh, Garda Depot, Phoenix Park

Paddy O'Beirne of Fitzgibbons Gents Outfitters, O'Connell Street

Terry Connell, Ballyhaunis

Dr. Egan, Castlebar and Clontarf Road, Dublin

Mick McHugh, Castlebar, Chief Provost of the Irish Army

Tommy O'Donnell, Charlestown, Editor of the Sunday Independent

Paddy O'Donnell, member of the Oireachtas reporting staff

Mrs. Loftus, Dawson Street and Killala

T.J. Killeen, Ballyhaunis, Controller of Dublin Postal District

T.J. Cogger, Ballyvaury, part owner of Kelly's Drapers on North Street.

I gather that the membership reached about four hundred around the 1920s. Dancing appears to have been the main social activity organised by the Association.

During the formative years of our country we had many fine Mayo people who excelled in the political, civic and business life of our state. People like Major John MacBride took a senior role in gaining our independence and that great Land Leaguer Michael Davitt of Straide achieved so much for the tenant farmers of his day. Not alone in Mayo but throughout the state, their contribution has been enormous.

Of course we also had the Mayo people whose names are immortal in the annals of their adopted countries. Grace Kelly comes immediately to mind. That great actress and princess of Monaco whose great-grandfather left Newport to settle in Philadelphia. There are several other sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters who have excelled in their adopted countries all over the world. Possibly the USA is highest in this

role of honour. The reasons are many and varied. But does it matter?

Names such as Martin Sheridan of Bohola, one of our greatest sporting heroes and a true Olympian. People like Fr. Patrick Peyton, the Rosary priest and now a candidate for canonization (Mayo Person of the Year 1988); Paul O'Dwyer (Mayo Person of the Year in 1973); businessman Joe Malone (Mayo Person of the Year '74); Adrian Flannelly of Attymass and New York (Mayo Person of the Year 1991).

There are many other people of Mayo descent, many well known and many not so well known who have reached the highest echelons of society but who have remained closely connected to their roots and who have been extraordinarily generous to those less fortunate in the world. We salute these people for what they have done. There is also that great son of Kiltimagh, Tom Flatley, businessman, hotelier and entrepreneur, who has been a great friend to all Mayo people and others in the city of Boston.

The Mayo Association has changed in many respects since its formative years. In growing to what it is today, it is fair to say that an injection of new members in the 1950s provided a transfusion of new ideas and activities which propelled the association in Dublin onto a higher plane than it had ever previously been. It could be said about County Mayo that its reach is greater than its size and I think that is to its credit.

Arthur Koestler said: "Laughter is a reflex, it serves no apparent logical purpose." Well laughter was about the only luxury that the Mayo people could afford for centuries and it served us well. Indeed Mayo people were always full of humour and sure it was one of the most effective release valves in times of tension or stress. Long may it last.

We sometimes hear the phrase 'Mayo God help us.' This could be construed as a derogatory remark if considered seriously, but it is not. God did help us and in some very special ways. After all we have Croagh Patrick, Knock Shrine and Ballintubber Abbey, which are known as centres of worship the world over. Pilgrims and visitors from all corners of the earth often include some or all of these places in their itinerary when they visit Ireland. On the other hand Mayo has always given generously of its sons and daughters to the church and religious orders. So maybe Mayo helped God, just as God helped Mayo. We would settle for a draw in these stakes.

Cromwell's declaration 'to hell or to Connaught' is well known. Perhaps it was not such a hell, after all. In Mayo we still have the best scenery, the friendliest people, a pollution free atmosphere and the softest weather.

The Mayo Association, having established its presence in the capital, went on to consolidate their position by being very active even though their numbers at times may have been small. However, they were of a calibre of people who saw the benefit that could accrue from the combined work of an active body of people.

It was hard to provide funds for the eventualities that arose in the first twenty five years and the following twenty five was no picnic either for the members of the Association. But, by all accounts, they did wonderful work during those years for their less fortunate county men and women. With the end of the civil war and then the second world war came a period of peace which gave hope, if not a lot more, for the future.

During the 1930s and '40s while the means of travel was slow in this country, at least the Mayo people had the pleasure of seeing their senior footballers in action in Croke Park and indeed at various venues throughout the length and breadth of the land. After winning, in succession, six national league titles from 1934 to 1939 they became known as the 'league specialists'. During that early part of the century very few, if any, Mayo people who travelled to Dublin would have stayed in hotels. They would have been put up by friends and lodgings organised by members of the Mayo Association.

The Green and Red.

The Mayo county colours- green and red- have questionable origins. They are reputed to have been acquired by the Mayo Association's first chairman, Ned Lavelle. Apparently a Mayo football team travelled to Dublin to play a national league match in the early 1930s. They did not have a set of jerseys with them.

As a result, it is said, Ned Lavelle, a member of the Kickhams GAA club got the loan of the Kickhams jerseys and subsequently they became the official county colours. I believe that they just forgot their jerseys, and that the true story of how Mayo acquired their colours is, as appears in the book, "The Green above the Red" by Terry Reilly and Ivan Neill.

They wrote that in 1886 a team from Towerhill/Ballyglass defeated Belcarra. A return match was arranged for Jan 24, 1886. This game failed to finish because of a 'dispute' between the teams. A game played in the Towerhill football field by two neutral teams at a later date was played on a field so well marked out with the motto "the green above

the red," which was the Towerhill motto, and which motto subsequently became the basis for the green and red colours of Mayo.

Sean Flanagan, Mayo captain 1950-1951, wrote an article in which he referred to the fact that in the early years of the GAA it was club teams that represented the county. Eventually things reached a stage where members from different clubs came together to represent the county. Hence the need for county colours. A meeting was held in Castlebar and all clubs were requested to be represented. At the conclusion of the meeting the colours were decided as green and red and that remains the case today.

Of course there have been many changes in the GAA, since the year of the foundation of the Mayo Association in Dublin. County Kildare, represented by Roseberry, defeated a club from Kerry called Tralee Mitchels by 1-7 to 0-5 in what is believed to be the first-ever recorded inter-county football game. There was one member of the Mayo Association who saw and played through those glory years for Mayo. He was Dick Hearn who played county football for six counties namely Mayo, Roscommon, Longford, Cork, Dublin and Donegal. He also achieved distinction as an amateur boxer. He boxed on numerous occasions for Ireland and was a former British amateur boxing champion. Both Dick Hearn himself and his wife, Claire were active members of the Mayo Association from the 1940s right through to the '70s.

Mayo won their first senior All-Ireland in 1936. That was hardly a surprise as they had won the national league titles in the previous two years. As the war broke out in 1939, there were many restrictions on travel within the country. Not until after 1945 did the Mayo football team reproduce the form of the 'thirties. Mayo again appeared in the All Ireland in 1948. They were defeated by Cavan by the narrowest of margins, one point. Mayo went on to win two All Irelands in a row in 1950 and 1951. Throughout the two years demands on the Mayo Association were very trying. However I have no doubt that the duties and the honours were a privilege which no Mayo Association has had the pleasure of enjoying in the many decades since those victories.

News and communications relied heavily on the national press which was then accepted as gospel truth. Of course that was the era of the commentators. Micheál O'Heihir brought Croke Park into many homes in Ireland on the old battery wireless. On All Ireland day he would easily have attained sainthood status in Mayo.

Through the war years.

Through the war years 1939-1945, the officers of the Mayo Association were for obvious reasons limited in their activities. However they kept the Association alive. They were aware of a noticeable drop in the numbers of people involved in the Association and undertook a number of attempts to recruit new members. The difficulties of the war years continued through the immediate decades after the war. The recession of the 1930s was hardly distinguishable from the 'Fifties and early 'sixties. There was much hardship and poverty in the country, particularly in rural areas where there were few jobs and agriculture provided, at best, a meagre existence. Vast numbers of Mayo people left their native county in search of work. Most went abroad.

We had rural electrification bringing power to the country and Mayo. These were the first signs of progress, of the move from recession to a growing economy, but it was a slow and laborious process. The day of the candle and oil lamps were moving into the past. No more buying of paraffin oil. Indeed the lighting of the candles and oil lamps was an art in itself. In some case it was part of a ritual. It could mean a major outing to the local village or town to buy candles, to collect a pint of paraffin oil and not to forget the wick for the lamps. These items were a necessity, for they helped the farmer on a winter's night as he sat on his three-legged stool to milk his few cows.

We might ask what the aforementioned scenario has to do with the Mayo Association. It paints a picture of rural life. It was a scene and a past that people of that period of time could and still do identify with.

While the members of the Mayo Association were seeking out a life for themselves in the capital and trying to make a home for their families in their adopted city, they were still conscious of where they came from. They felt the need and probably the obligation to do whatever they could to help Mayo people coming to live and work in the city.

Even the days and nights of Ceili House and that great entertainer of the 1950s "Din Joe" had not made its way into every house in Mayo. That pleasure was still confined to those homes with the wet battery fully charged for a particular programme.

Those who had carried the flag of the Association during the 1930s into the 1940s may have enjoyed being part of the success on the football fields. I refer again to "The Green above the Red" by Terry Reilly and Ivan Neill. They recorded that Mayo won their first All-Ireland football final, a junior championship, by defeating Donegal by 2-15 to 2-2 in

1933 and then going on to beat a London team in the final proper. Subsequently the team and officials of the county board were entertained to a banquet and “smoking concert” in Barry’s hotel by Mayo men then resident in Dublin. People from all walks of life were represented among the 120 present, from Ministers of State downwards.

The working committee of the Mayo Association in charge of arrangements included Commandant McHugh (Chairman), Messrs J.S. Ryan (hon. Secretary), P. Beirne (hon Treasurer), P. O’Hara, E. Lavelle and Supt Creagh. Some of these Mayo people who had helped organize the banquet in 1933 were members of the original committee of 1905; they were still active twenty eight years after the Association was founded.

Mayo football teams have travelled much further afield than Dublin. As early as 1932 a team went to the USA where Mayo societies in many American east coast cities were always on hand to welcome and entertain the visiting sportsmen. The hospitality both received and given by Mayo people and Mayo societies throughout the world remains a delightful trait to have and is a credit to the pride and the bond that exists among people from the county.

The old proverb that ‘nothing succeeds like success’ will remain true as long as members of the Association continue to give their leisure time to the Association.

The Transition Years.

The “middle” era of the Mayo Association saw some considerable change. Those who struggled to keep the Association alive through the dark, unending war years passed on the baton to a new and younger breed of Mayo migrant.

It was not until the mid ‘Sixties that the Irish economy began to show some improvement But the Mayo Association was in a good position to benefit from the approaching good days. For the first fifty years of the Association the tendency was for little change. Officers, once elected, tended to hold on, or be held on, for considerable periods of time. There was little enough “new blood” available to take on the role of hosting teams, looking out for newly arrived migrants from the home county and fundraising ventures.

While members might have felt a need for change the reality was that not too many were offering for the officer positions and prudence demanded that the executive members be returned annually to their positions.

From its formative years the officer body of the association tended to be made up of those who had enjoyed business and commercial success or who had acquired good jobs. They were, in the main, prominent in the public, business and social life of the capital city; they were deemed to 'know the ropes' and be in a position to offer help to a boy or girl coming from the county who would not know their way around the city and who would have difficulty in finding work. It was understandable that people who were willing to serve were retained in their positions. Younger people would find it difficult to question the officers at meetings until such time as they had established their credentials.

Of course there were annual meetings when members would not go forward for election and so the status quo remained. It was not necessarily a bad thing. Continuity was maintained and the association continued to be there. But like most other things in life neither time nor tide stands still.

The association had been buoyed up in the dark decades of the 'thirties to the 'fifties by the success of the Mayo teams. While those successes placed a strain on resources and manpower, sharing in and being part of the success provided the adrenalin boost that maintained the enthusiasm of the Associations' officers and members.

The Mayo senior footballers had won two All-Irelands in 1950 and 1951, an unprecedented achievement for the county up to that time and an achievement not since accomplished. It was a great time to be involved with an Association that hosted and honoured such great sporting heroes.

Muintir Mhaigh Eo was born.

The Mayo Association was not the first of its kind in the capital. As we know they came into being in 1905 but they were pre-dated by associations such as Wexford and Wicklow which were established in 1888. The Mayo Association could however claim to be the most active, vibrant and high profile down through the years.

Other county associations were springing up in the capital and vied with Mayo for prominence.

About this time (late 1950's) Paddy O'Beirne and Frank Patten suggested to the membership that they should throw open the doors of the Association and seek to recruit



Paddy O'Beirne, complete with trademark cigar, photographed at a function in Oct 1975. In 1958 O'Beirne and many of the older members of the Mayo Association stood aside to allow "new blood" infuse new life, ideas and vitality into the Association which came to be known as Muintir Mhaigh Eo, Áth Cliath.



Major John McBride, first President of Muintir Mhaigh Eo and a generous benefactor in the early days when funds were scarce.

young Mayo people who had taken up residence in the city. They felt that for the association to grow and thrive it was necessary to broaden the activities of the Association.

Paddy O'Beirne was a native of Aghamore. He was born, Byrne, son of Dominick and Maria Byrne, one of a family of 21, eighteen of whom survived, into Bruff House. He was apprenticed to the drapery trade in Ballina.

He and his family were involved in the national struggle and a brother of his, John, who was married to one of the O'Dwyer's of Bohola, was jailed in Galway during the Troubles.

Because of his political involvement, life in Ballina became difficult and Paddy moved to Dublin where he entered the drapery department in Clerys. After a few years in Clerys,

he left to establish his own business in Abbey Street. The business grew and he later formed an alliance with a Cork man John Fitzgibbon. They established the very successful O'Beirne and Fitzgibbon drapery business in O'Connell Street. It is a measure of his standing and acumen that he continued to be a good friend of Denis Guiney (Clerys), a competitor, throughout his business career.

Paddy was an accomplished footballer and togged out for Mayo in the All-Ireland final of 1921 when Mayo were beaten by Dublin. Two years later he switched allegiance to Dublin with whom he won an All-Ireland (1923) and was also a member of the Dublin team beaten by Kerry in the final in 1924.

But while he changed allegiance as a player he did not lose his interest in his home county. He was in at the start of the Mayo Association in Dublin and continued to offer support to the organisation up until his death. He travelled the length and breadth of the country supporting Mayo teams and even in later years when his own sons had taken up rugby, which he also followed, he still retained his interest in the fortunes of Mayo football.

O'Beirne was to play an important role in the revival of the fortunes of the Mayo Association in the late 1940s and the 1950s. Along with Ned Lavelle he was one of the prime movers behind meetings of the association which were held in The Catholic Club, right across from his business premises in O'Connell Street. Also prominent at those meetings were Frank Patten, Dick and Claire Hearn, Kathleen Hanley, Frank McCormack and Paddy O'Beirne's nephew Joe Lydon, who was later to become Secretary of the Association in 1958 with Eamonn Mongey as Chairman.

Paddy O'Beirne remained a committed supporter of the Association and a dedicated Mayo man right up to his death on June 6, 1978 at the age of 76.

Being on hand to welcome Mayo football teams to the city was all very fine, but it did not present the opportunity for full time activity. While there had been a golden era during the 30's when national leagues titles were being won with monotonous regularity and again a golden era of championship involvement from 1948 to 1955, the commitment to that type of activity was not very taxing.

Dublin was emerging from the dark days of the "economic war" and the post world war depression. The capital was beginning to see a form of economic recovery and was a magnet for some of the country's finest and brightest. Mayo people coming to Dublin for

work and opportunity were well educated and ambitious. They were more confident in themselves than the previous generations who went in search of work.

They were ready to be challenged and the Mayo Association was an obvious outlet for their talents. The O'Beirne/Patten proposal to stand aside and allow a transfusion of new blood sought not only to increase the membership but also to broaden the scope of activities. A meeting was called in 1958 when the then officers of the Association, in what can now be seen as a very generous gesture towards the future and betterment of their organisation, agreed not to seek re-election.

They were throwing the doors open not just to membership, but to the levers of control. It was agreed that Ned Lavelle, who was the link with the founding meeting, should continue as President but the rest of the officer positions were up for grabs. It was a magnanimous gesture that paved the way for a new and enthusiastic membership.

At that crucial meeting, Eamonn Mongey, who was a household figure because of his exploits on the football fields of Ireland was elected Chairman. Kathleen Hanley, from Killasser, Swinford, became Hon Secretary and an entirely new committee was put in place. A new constitution was drafted and adopted. Under the new constitution the objectives set out included the provision of cultural and social outlets for the members and the promotion of the economic interests of Mayo. The name of the Association was changed to Muintir Mhaigh Eo, Áth Cliath.

Quiz programmes, socials, lectures, question time and inter-county debates, discussing the topics, controversial and otherwise, of the day became part and parcel of the activities. Kerry, Tipperary, Laois, Limerick, Donegal, Wexford and other counties were actively engaged in such pursuits which also played a prominent part in the re-vitalised Mayo association. Drama too, under the guidance of Joe Lydon (Kilkelly), was added to the events and the Muintir Mhaigh Eo drama group had many notable ventures to record. The influence of Liam O'Hora, one time manager of the Gaiety Theatre and later Film Censor, no doubt had a bearing on the success of the drama group.

Liam also featured in the lectures which Muintir Mhaigh Eo staged and held his audiences spellbound with talks on 1798 and The Famine. Among others who delivered lectures were Mr. Conor Maguire, the Chief Justice, Aine Ní Cheannain, Fr. Tommy Egan on Ballintubber Abbey, Des Moore on Kilmainham jail, Dr. Seamus Caulfield on the Céide Fields and Mrs Cecil Woodham Smith on her book 'The Great Hunger'. That lecture was delivered in Trinity College in Dublin and was attended by Mr. Eamon De

Valera, then President of Ireland.

Mr. De Valera was something of a patron of Muintir Mhaigh Eo and honoured the organisation on a number of occasions. Muintir Mhaigh Eo was the first county association to be received at Aras An Uachtarain (in '1964) when the first ever Mayo Person of the Year, Patrick Keegan and members of the Association were greeted in the Phoenix Park by the President.

Mr. De Valera also accepted an invitation to unveil a plaque to the Association's first President Major John McBride at his house at The Quay in Westport in 1966. He also attended Mass at the Pro-Cathedral in Dublin on May 5 of that year to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the execution of Major McBride.

In 1959, Eamon Mongey stood down as Chair. But he had groomed a fellow Castlebar man to take over. Joe Malone was making a name for himself in business in the city and brought his business acumen and drive to the Chair of Muintir Mhaigh Eo. He also brought flair and organized the first Dress Dance. During his term the horizon was broadened to include a first ever county association visit to New York. It was a major undertaking and took some years to bring to fruition. Malone persevered with the idea and persuaded the membership that it was possible. And so it proved to be.

In May 1962, Muintir Mhaigh Eo, now led by another Castlebar man, Frank McCormack, became the first county association to charter an Aer Lingus boeing for a flight to New York. Eamon Mongey was the PRO and saw to it that the crew of the flight would be from Mayo. The captain was Tom Cregg, the co-pilot was Barney O'Beirne and the first officer was Tom Kelly. The hostesses had Mayo connections. (Barney O'Beirne was later to die tragically and mysteriously aboard the Aer Lingus flight that went down off the Tuskar Rock some years later).

The Muintir Mhaigh Eo trip caught the imagination of the country. In New York the group was feted royally with the doors to the highest political offices in the Big Apple opened up to them... thanks in the main to the good offices of Bill and Paul O'Dwyer.

They were introduced to Mayor Richard Wagner in his offices and, on the social side of things the group was hosted to a banquet in the Four Seasons Restaurant. One of the highlights of the trip for Chairman Frank McCormack was to be present at a birthday party in Madison Square Gardens for President John F Kennedy. Among the guests at the party were Harry Belafonte, Jack Benny, Peter Lawford, Peggy Lee, Maria Callas and



Frank McCormack shakes hands with fellow Castlebar man and Govt Minister Micheál O'Móráin prior to boarding the historic Muintir Mhaigh Eo flight to New York in 1962.

Marlyn Monroe.

Among the one hundred and forty passengers on that famous flight were a number of those who had kept the flag of the Mayo Association flying through the less dramatic but, from a football point of view, equally exciting years prior to the re-invigorating 1960s. Foremost among these were Claire and Dick Hearn. Dick Hearn was a popular and well known sporting figure who needs little introduction to the readers of this history. However not so well known or documented was the important role played by Claire Hearn in keeping the Association alive and functioning.

With a broader remit and with a constant infusion of new blood, Muintir Mhaigh Eo, Áth Cliath became more streamlined and professional in their outlook. In a sense the organisation was forced to move with the times.

The 'Sixties'.

For good or bad the 1960s were a time of change. The world had survived the Suez Canal crisis and Ronnie Delaney had won his Melbourne medal. Ireland was a more outward looking and confident place. The "pill" had arrived. Beatlemania and the mini-skirt were the fashion of the times. John F Kennedy had visited Ireland in 1963 and was later to be assassinated in Dallas, Texas the same year. It was the decade in which Dr. Christian Bernard performed the first successful human heart transplant. Neil Armstrong walked on the moon. Vatican 11 was less a topic of conversation.

Nearer to home there were also newsworthy events. In England Christine Keeler and Mandy Rice Davies brought down a government in what became known as the Profumo Affair. *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, when it escaped the net of the censor, provided an alternative view of sexual relationships and not to be outdone by any of those events we had the Late Late Show causing its own controversy around the issue of the bishop and the nightie. The nation was alive and active, there was a feeling of cheerfulness about Ireland's future. Optimism was in the air. The country was moving on, leaving behind the ultra-conservative society and forcing the Irish Censorship Board into retreat.

The Debates

As well as breaking ground with their trip to new York, the Association was involved more in cultural and social activities. Among these were a series of debates that involved some of the more prominent and, in many cases, controversial figures of the times.

The debates proved popular with chairmen such as the colourful senior counsel and Minister Pat Lindsay and top speakers of the day, including the then emerging playwright, John B Keane were invited to take part.

The value that the Listowel man placed on the debates is to be seen in an exchange of letters he had with Eamonn Mongey It would seem from the correspondence that the discourse following the debate may have been just as important as the debates themselves and included such topics as the GAA Ban on foreign games at the very beginning of that great GAA controversy.

The country, as a whole, was adapting to the more hectic life style of the "swinging '60s". There was a real upturn in the economy. The country was benefiting. Even Mayo

Listowel
31. 10. '63

Dear Eamon,

Many thanks for your letter and expression of thanks. The night with the Maymen was a pleasure and as I said afterwards to the secretary, the first time I was privileged to be part of a really civilized and talented body. The chairmanship was more than just good. It was highly professional and that to my mind is what makes the event so successful. A less resourceful man would have been up to his neck over the G.R.A. or under discussion. But however he manages. It was a pity we had no more time but without doubt I think we held much the same views on the Ban. There will be next time I hope

For the cause
The very best
John B. Keane

Playwright John B. Keane was among those who took part in the debates organised by Muintir Mhaigh Eo in Dublin. Here he alludes to the quality of the chairmanship and also makes reference to "The Ban" a GAA subject that was topical at the time.

experienced a boom of sorts with new industries setting up and providing much needed employment. The building industry mushroomed, practically overnight. Many emigrants returned to Mayo and Ireland to set up business or take up work. The era of the entrepreneur arrived. In a relatively short time-span the country experienced a boom period. This unexplained upturn in the economy, with its improved wealth and a national building boom had not been forecast. It is somehow a mystery how the economists and political pundits of the time had not envisaged that such an unusual phenomenon was about to descend on the nation.

We also had Vatican 11 with all its ramifications. The Latin mass was suddenly consigned to the archives of history, though not without many objections from within the catholic church. Perhaps with all these upheavals and changes, society was in need of some type of counselling! In the domains of business, trading and religion, the moral ethics and principles were seriously tarnished. Even for those living in the fast lane and others enjoying the fruits of success there was the counter-balance of the many that were left behind. They were left behind, whether through bad luck, ill health, lack of education or the simple inability to cope with life. There were many tragic cases of human misfortune which surfaced not only in Mayo but in Ireland as a whole. As with the rising tide there is a lot of debris left when the water subsides.

For many years Muintir Mhaigh Eo has helped those with physical or mental disability,

hospitals and many other charitable organisations by giving financial aid to assist in the work of providing a better quality of life for those finding it difficult to cope on their own. Occasionally the association has also provided the necessary funds to enable students to attend college, students who would not otherwise have had the financial means to put themselves through college.

Muintir Mhaigh Eo and Gaeltacht Scholarships

Nor was in unknown for the association to provide loans to a community or co-operative to assist them over a period of time until they became solvent or self-sufficient.

In view of the requests that came from individuals, co-operatives and communities seeking financial assistance, one could be forgiven for thinking that Muintir Mhaigh Eo had statutory powers. In fact if the government departments of the day had been sensitive about their duties and obligations they might have accused the association of usurping their authority. Muintir Mhaigh Eo is proud of their record of helping the less well off in society and there are few if any deserving causes or charities that have been turned down when they appealed for help.

At a stage in the 1970s Muintir Mhaigh Eo seriously considered purchasing their own premises in Dublin. However this did not materialize and that was a pity. Such premises would have given the Association much status and would have been a focal point for all Mayo people from all over the world to meet.

The Association has used many premises for their meetings and functions, including the Waldorf, Grosvenor, Ormond, Wynnes, Clarence, and Midland hotels which were all pretty much centre city locations and were convenient for members travelling by bus to attend. Other venues used include the Green Isle, Tara Towers, Montrose, Jurys and the Burlington where the big gatherings such as the annual dinner dances were staged. As numbers attending the annual dinner dance now generally exceeds one thousand the choice of venues has been limited to the Burlington and more recently City West.

Since 1967 all the Muintir Mhaigh Eo meetings have been held in the Garda Social Club in Harrington Street, where Garda Det Supt Jim Murphy, Chairman of the Club and a former President of Muintir Mhaigh Eo (1990-1992) has ensured proper facilities for conducting the business.

Co-operation, unity and a desire to make the Association a success has always been a priority with officers and members. That would be particularly true in relation to the Mayo senior football teams on their travels abroad to places such as New York, Boston, Chicago and Philadelphia from the 1930s through to the late 1960s. The team and mentors were entertained by Mayo societies to an overwhelming extent. On one particular occasion they had the distinction of meeting with the heavyweight champion of the world Jim Corbett whose father came from Ballycushion, Ballinrobe. The popularity of those teams could be gauged by the attendances of up to 30,000 who regularly attended at those venues where Mayo played.

It appears that Philadelphia lived up to its name as being a city of Brotherly Love with outstanding hospitality shown to all who visited. Indeed it can be deduced from "The Green above the Red" by Terry Reilly and Ivan Neill that this hospitality and support was a feature of all the cities visited.

The Mayo Person of the Year Award.

Needless to say this optimism found its way into Muintir Mhaigh Eo. While the promise and optimism of the period did not endure the 'Sixties was, nonetheless, a good and productive period in the life of the Association.

Following on the success of the tour to New York, the Association was soon again breaking new ground. The trip- a huge undertaking in its day- had the benefit of strengthening the links between Mayo associations at home and abroad. It also provided the confidence to undertake new projects.

One of these projects was the Mayo Person of the Year Award which was introduced in 1964. The award, in those early days, was known as the Liam O'Hora award in memory of a man who had been a vital part of the Association and who had unfortunately died at a relatively young age in March 1964. The idea for this project came from Eamon Mongey. From the outset, strict guidelines were laid down and it was made clear that if the standard of nominations did not measure up then no award would be made. Claremorris born sculptor Edward Delaney designed the first award.

The inaugural winner was a second generation Mayo man from England. Patrick Keegan earned worldwide recognition by becoming the first lay man to address the Vatican Council. The award was presented at a function in the Intercontinental Hotel with over



The strength of the Dublin Mayo association was to be seen in the ability to gain access to the President of Ireland.... the first county association to be so honoured. In this photo the first ever Mayo Man of the Year, Mr. Patrick Keegan visited Aras an Uachtaráin. Pictured are Mr. Charles Kenny (President) Eamon Mongey, Mr. Keegan, President Eamon De Valera and Paddy O'Beirne.

650 people in attendance and which was presided over by the Chairman, Charles Kenny.

The choice for the award was very well received and Mr. Keegan, who proved to be a lovely person with a gift for story-telling, regaled those who met him with wonderful and witty insights into the "backstage" goings-on at the Vatican Council. The winner, along with members of Muintir Mhaigh Eo were received in Aras an Uachtarain by President De Valera, setting an important seal of approval on the first recipient and also on the award itself.

The award is much sought after and is always received with great respect and dignity when presented by the Chairman of Muintir Mhaigh Eo. The adherence to strict criteria for the award was exemplified in 1968 when it was decided that none of the nominees lived up to the exacting requirements and no award was made. This was the only year in the long history of the awards when no award was made.

And not alone is the award itself subject to severe standards but the method of adjudication also stands up to the most objective scrutiny. The panel of three independent people can have no connection with Mayo and are always well known and respected people.

It is a matter of some amazement that the standard of recipient remains so high. It is a tribute to all who are nominated, and as there can only be one winner, there are many exemplary nominees each year who go unrewarded and unrecognized. However the successful nominees always appear to be individuals of rare accomplishments. Adjudicating panels have frequently made the point about the difficulty they experience in coming to a decision because of the quality and very often diverse abilities of the nominees. Rarely have there been serious quibbles over the selections, though there has been much debate.

Only on a few occasions did the nomination did give rise to some controversy. One of these was in 1978 when some rather irate letters were sent to the Mayo and national papers concerning the conferring of the award on Mr. Charles J. Haughey. Mr. Haughey, in fact proved a popular and worthy winner.

The following year there was also some controversy when Ballindine disability worker Martin Donoghue was the recipient. The controversy was not a reflection on Mr. Donoghue but revolved around the failure to recognise Mons James Horan, the man behind the development of Knock Airport. The sting was taken out of that controversy however when it emerged that Mons Horan had not even been nominated for the prestigious award. That omission, in relation to one of the finest Mayo people of the twentieth century, was rectified some time later in 1984 when Mons Horan was recognized and granted the Mayo Person of the Year award.

Without exception, the recipients of the Mayo Person of the Year awards have been a credit to the position they held. All walks of life have been represented from the statesman to the farmer, male and female. The award winners have varied in age from 22 years old Tom Jordan (Kiltimagh) in 1977 to the renowned Rosary Priest, Fr. Patrick Peyton who was 79 when he received the award in 1987.

In 1969 the award went to Sean Flanagan, the Mayo All-Ireland winning captain of 1950/'51. But, rather than football, the award recognised his contribution to Irish political life and his election as a member of the European Parliament.

Another who was recognised for his contribution to political life and on the European stage was Castlebar man Padraig Flynn who became Irish EU Commissioner and who was honoured at Mayo Person of the Year in 1993. All award winners have outstanding achievements in their careers, no matter what their discipline. The 1990 winner was Dr. Seamus Caulfield who was largely responsible for the research into the Céide Fields in

Belderrig and the development of the Interpretative Centre which now details the life and times of this 5000 years old settlement.

During 1990 Muintir Mhaigh Eo had a three-way radio link opened between Mid West Radio in Ballyhaunis, Dublin and New York. The New York radio station was well known for its support of the Irish in New York and its efforts to assist Morrison visa distribution among Irish citizens in the city. The Dublin end of the broadcast was hosted in the Shelbourne Hotel, while, in New York, Adrian Flannelly, who was to be Mayo Person of the Year for 1991, was the director and presenter of the programme on WKWK Radio. This was one of the most interesting and enterprising undertakings by the Association during that period.

In 1992 Dr. Thomas Mitchell, a world renowned academic, who had been made Provost of Trinity College was honoured with the title of Mayo Person of the Year. He was the first Catholic to be elected Provost in the four hundred years since King James held the post.

The Virginia Gallagher Memorial Award.

This award was first presented in 1992. Virginia Gallagher was a former President of Muintir Mhaigh Eo. She had been an active member for fifteen years and held many positions within the association. A nurse by profession, she was a native of Swinford. She died an untimely death on June 7, 1992. She was wife of John Gallagher, a native of Charlestown and also a former Chairman of the Association. She was mother of Marie, Clodagh and Sinéad.

Her death was a great loss to the association and to the many members of the association who worked with her. She was an example and inspiration to members. To honour her memory Muintir Mhaigh Eo decided to name the Mayo Person of the Year award after her and now, annually, the family presents the award to the winner.

Mayo Person of the Year Awards

Roll of Honour 1964-2005

- 1964:** Patrick Keegan. *Family originally from Kilmovee*
- 1965:** Fr. Tommy Egan of Castlebar, C C Ballintubber.
- 1966:** no award
- 1967:** John Healy, *Carracastle, Charlestown.*
- 1968:** Muredach McAndrew, Killala.
- 1969:** Sean Flanagan MEP.
- 1970:** Joe Mulrooney, *Partry.*
- 1971:** Jim Maguire, *Ballina.*
- 1972:** Ms Rosaleen Gallagher, *Bangor.*
- 1973:** Paul O'Dwyer *New York and Bohola.*
- 1974:** Joe Malone, *Breaffy, Castlebar.*
- 1975:** Fr. Kevin Loftus (*Ballycastle*).
- 1976:** Joe Smyth, *Kilmovee.*
- 1977:** Tom Jordan, *Kiltimagh.*
- 1978:** Charles J Haughey, *Castlebar and Dublin*
- 1979:** Martin Donoghue (*Ballindine*).
- 1980:** Jim Brett, *Castlebar.*
- 1981:** Noel Dorr, *Foxford.*
- 1982:** Dr. Mick Loftus (*Crossmolina*).
- 1983:** Fr. Edward Tuffy, *CC, Brickens.*
- 1984:** Mons James Horan, *PP, Knock.*
- 1985:** Mick Lally, *Tourmakeady.*
- 1986:** Val Gunning, *Geesala..*
- 1987:** Fr. Patrick Peyton, *Attymass and California.*
- 1988:** Ms Mary Robinson, *Ballina.*
- 1989:** Willie Joe Padden, *Belmullet.*
- 1990:** Dr. Seamus Caulfield, *Ballycastle.*
- 1991:** Adrian Flannelly, *Attymass.*
- 1992:** Dr. Tom Mitchell, *Belcarra.*
- 1993:** Pdraig Flynn, *Castlebar.*
- 1994:** Fr. Frank Fahey, *Ballintubber.*
- 1995:** Brian Mooney, *Kiltimagh.*
- 1996:** Kevin Bourke, *Ballyvoary.*
- 1997:** Seán Hannick, *Killala.*
- 1998:** Dr. Jerry Cowley, *Mulranny.*
- 1999:** Paddy McGuinness, *Castlebar.*
- 2000:** John Grant, *Ballindine.*
- 2001:** Johnny Mee, *Castlebar.*
- 2002:** Sean Noone, *Belmullet.*
- 2003:** Mary Davis, *Kiltimagh and Dublin.*
- 2004:** Nollaig O Muraille, *Knock.*

The Meitheal Awards

The introduction of the Meitheal Awards was another step forward for Muintir Mhaigh Eo, Áth Cliath. In the late 1970s and through the 1980s community organisations proved to be the driving force in the improvement and enhancement of many areas of the county.

At a time when resources were scarce much valuable work, that would otherwise have gone unattended to, was done in communities all over Mayo. This was volunteerism at its best. People got stuck in to a wide variety of projects from tidy towns, village enhancement, housing for the elderly, history, heritage and cultural promotion. The work was done without any thought of reward.

Muintir Mhaigh Eo, Áth Cliath decided that such effort by communities should be recognised in some way and decided to institute an annual award for communities. The concept of the meitheal- a group of neighbours coming together to assist the gathering of a harvest or to undertake a project for the common good, was still alive in the memory of many Mayo people and it was fitting that this aspect of good-neighbourliness would recognise community effort.

The Meitheal award was first presented to Bishop Joseph Cunnane and Mons James Horan to recognise the community commitment in Knock. The award is presented on the same occasion as the Mayo Person of the Year award and adds considerably to the excitement of that annual function.

To date there have been twenty-five awards made.

- 1979:** Bishop Cunnane and Mons James Horan (Knock)
- 1980:** Killasser Community
- 1981:** Ballyhaunis
- 1982:** Castlebar Song Contest Committee
- 1983:** Charlestown Housing for Elderly society
- 1984:** No Award
- 1985:** Dublin Committee of O'Dwyer-Cheshire Home
- 1986:** Ballycroy Community
- 1987:** Committee of Balla Co-op and Ballinafad College

- 1988: Bonniclon Community Council
- 1989: General Humbert School, Ballina
- 1990: Foxford IRD
- 1991: Achill Day Care Centre
- 1992: Ballyglass Lifeboat Crew and Committee
- 1993: Tír Sáile- North Mayo Heritage Trail
- 1994: Ballina Salmon Festival Committee
- 1995: Enniscoe Heritage Centre, Crossmolina
- 1996: St Brid's, Castlebar/Wheatfield Assist project
- 1997: Ballyglass FC
- 1998: Carragorru Village, Knockmore
- 1999: Sheridan Memorial Committee, Bohola
- 2000: Jonathan Mullin/Finbar Egan and Mayo Ladies Football Team
- 2001: Bofield Ceili Band
- 2002: Claremorris Community Services
- 2003: Sacred Heart Home, Castlebar
- 2004: Swinford Cancer Action Group

Officers of the Association

While considerable research has been done to try to trace the officers of the Mayo Association from its foundation, the task has proved impossible. Minute books and records have been lost, an occurrence that is not all that unusual in an organisation where there has, in recent times, at any rate, been a regular turn-over of officers and members.

We are well aware of the huge contribution made by people like Ned Lavelle, and Paddy O'Beirne from the earliest days and the involvement of people such as the Shouldice brothers and others as detailed in the body of the history. However there is not sufficient information to compile a list of the officers for the first fifty years.

Thanks to the commitment of a number of people and the good memory of such as Eamonn Mongey, Frank McCormack and Joe Lydon, it has been possible to provide the names for Presidents and Chairpersons from the late 1950's up to the more recent times for which full lists of officers are available. These then are the officers:

	President:		Chairperson:
1959/'61	Ned Lavelle	1958/'59	Eamonn Mongey
1961/'65	Paddy O'Beirne	1960/'61	Joe Malone
1965/'67	Joe Malone	1962/'63	Frank McCormack
1967/'69	Frank McCormack	1964	Charlie Kenny
1969/'71	Eamonn Mongey	1965/'66	Enda Marren
1971/'73	George Henry	1967/'68	Paddy Forkin
1973/'75	Claire Hearn	1969/'70	George Henry
1975/'77	Enda Marren	1971/'72	Claire Hearn
1977/'79	Brendan O'Cléirigh	1973/'74-	Michael Walsh
1979/'81	Jim Snee	1975/'76	Brendan O'Cléirigh
1981/'83	John Gallagher	1977/'78	Louis Maguire
		1979/'80	Kathleen Hanley
		1981/'82	John Gallagher

Milestones

Since the 1960s, every decade has seen new initiatives and activities undertaken by the Association. Here is a summary of these:

- 1962:** The Association's first chartered flight to the US, piloted by an all Mayo crew.
- 1964:** The first Mayo Person of the Year award presented.
- 1966:** The association sponsored an educational scholarship for students in Agricultural colleges.
- 1979:** The first Meitheal award is presented
- 1984:** The first Mayo Yearbook is published, edited by Josephine Finnerty-Snee.
- 1989:** The first Gaeltacht scholarships are awarded to Dublin based children.
- 1989:** The first Mayo World Convention held in Westport.
- 1992:** Mayo born President Mary Robinson receives Muntir Mhaigh Eo in Áras an Uachtaraín.
- 1993:** The first Mayo Music scholarships presented by the President of Muintir Mhaigh Eo in conjunction with the Minister for Education (Niamh Breathnach).

History of the Mayo Association, Dublin.

Year	President	Chairperson	Vice-president	Secretary	Treasurer	PRO
1983/84	Mary Fraine	Frank Fleming	Kathleen Hanley/ Brendan Jeffers	Helena Kelly	Michael Walsh	Joe Lydon
1984/85	Kathleen Hanley	Frank Fleming	Mary Fraine/ Josephine Snee-Finnerty	Helena Kelly	Michael Walsh	Joe Lydon
1985/86	Kathleen Hanley	Michael Walsh	ditto	Helen Gallagher	Kieran O'Brien	Virginia Gallagher
1986/87	Frank Fleming	Michael Walsh	ditto	Helen Gallagher	Kieran O'Brien	Virginia Gallagher
1987/88	Frank Fleming	Kieran O'Brien	Kathleen Hanley/ Virginia Gallagher	Helena Kelly	Noel Howley	Paddy Moran
1988/89	Virginia Gallagher	Kieran O'Brien	Jo Finnerty/ Aidan Prendergast	Helena Kelly	Noel Howley	Paddy Moran
1989/90	Virginia Gallagher	Noel Howley	ditto	Frank Walsh	Paddy Moran	Helena Kelly
1990/91	Jim Murphy	Noel Howley	Michael Walsh/ Sheila Gunning	Frank Walsh	Paddy Moran	Helena Kelly
1991/92	Jim Murphy	Paddy Moran	ditto	Michael Cannon	Frank Walsh	John Garavin
1992/93	Sheila Gunning	Paddy Moran	Helena Kelly	Michael Cannon	Frank Walsh	John Garavin
1993/94	Sheila Gunning	Frank Walsh	Helena Kelly	Padraig Jordan	Michael Cannon	Dom Byrne
1994/95	Helena Kelly	Frank Walsh	Noel Howley	Padraig Jordan	Michael Cannon	Dom Byrne
1995/96	Helena Kelly	Michael Cannon	Noel Howley	Clodagh Ni Chondubh	Padraig Jordan	Michael Lynn
1996/97	Noel Howley	Michael Cannon	Evelyn Davis	Peter Devine	Padraig Jordan	Kevin Ruane
1997/98	Noel Howley	Padraig Jordan	Evelyn Davis	Mary Fraine	Peter Devine	Aidan Prendergast
1998/99	Evelyn Davis	Padraig Jordan	John Garavin	Mary Fraine	Peter Devine	Aidan Prendergast
1999/00	Evelyn Davis	Peter Devine	John Garavin	Brendan O'Brien	John Fergus	Walter Kilcullen
2000/01	John Garavin	Peter Devine	Paddy Moran	Brendan O'Brien	John Fergus	Walter Kilcullen
2001/02	John Garavin*	Walter Kilcullen	Paddy Moran*	Eddie Kennedy	Mike Riley	A.J. Prendergast
2002/03	Peter Devine	Walter Kilcullen	Paddy Moran	Eddie Kennedy	Mike Riley	A.J. Prendergast
2003/04	Peter Devine	Mona McGarry	Michael Cannon	Mary Fraine	Helena Kelly	Cathal Cannon
2004/05	Paddy Moran	Mona McGarry	Michael Cannon	Mary Fraine	Helena Kelly	Cathal Cannon
2005/06	Paddy Moran	Jim Murphy	Michael Cannon	Pearse Culkln	John F. Higgins	Cathal Cannon

* Resigned

Drama

Throughout practically the entire history of the association, drama has been an integral part of the activity of the members. The first president Ned Lavelle was an enthusiastic supporter of drama and was involved both as player and director in many productions.

That tradition was continued by Liam O'Hora and Joe Lydon and later on by Evelyn Davis and Bridie Quinn. Under the title of the Mayo Association Western Arts group they undertook a number of engagements around the country and entered in many drama festivals featuring on many occasions among the award winners.

The Group performed much of the work of Synge and also included John B Keane's work in their repertoire. In more recent time they generally included one of the plays on the Leaving Cert course.

The major undertaking of the group came in 1994 when they travelled to New York and played a number of college venues with a specially scripted production, by Bridie Quinn, covering Irish drama and theatre and including works from Yeats, Synge, Keane and Patrick Kavanagh.

While these would be the major initiatives, they in no way reflect the totality of the work undertaken. Contributions are continually being made to a number of causes. Where people of organisations find themselves in need financial assistance is provided, in many cases anonymously out of respect for the dignity of the recipients.

With the advances made in modern travel it has become far easier to maintain contact with Mayo people and Associations abroad.

Muintir Mhaigh Eo Áth Cliath set the headline with their trip to New York in 1962 and has maintained contact with units abroad. In 1990 under the chairman, Noel Howley, members of the Association again visited New York. They were based in the city for two weeks which included the St Patrick's Day celebrations. They were part of the New York parade and the visit, according to those who enjoyed it, passed as if it was only two days. Everywhere they went they were accorded VIP treatment and were overwhelmed by the astounding generosity bestowed on them by their New York counterparts. Among those who laid on the hospitality were Eugene Rooney, Jim Hyland, Sean Grogan (President of the New York Mayo Society), John Garvey, Jim Lombard, Jim Fitzpatrick and many others, guides and friends.

In March 1992, the association visited Boston. For most members it was a trip where they felt at home, with all the Irish names on the shop-fronts and advertising hoardings. It was a city steeped in Irish history from Mayor Curley in the penal times to Mayor Raymond Flynn in 1992. The Chairman of the association on that trip was Paddy Moran who presented a copy of the book "Maamtrasna, the Murder and the Mystery" by Fr. Jarlath Waldron to the Mayor. In return the Mayor presented Paddy Moran with a book "Boston Photographs" which beautifully illustrated the City of Boston. Also the Paul Revere Bowl, a memento of the famous silversmith who warned the Washington army of the arrival of an English invasion force, was presented by the President of the Mayo Boston Association, Gerry Curry.

On the '92 trip the visiting Muintir Mhaigh Eo party took part in the Boston St Patrick's Day parade where they were warmly welcomed and applauded by the crowds. Subsequently the party attended functions hosted by the Consulate General Liam Cunniffe. They also received invitations to attend many parties and hostelries but a tight schedule prevented them from including all. Gerry Curry, Vincent Kerrigan, Tom McNally and many others provided a king's welcome for the visitors and the trip is remembered fondly by all who participated. The city is intrinsically linked to Ireland through the Kennedy clan and many other pioneering Irish-Americans.

The Muintir Mhaigh Eo Yearbook

The first Muintir Mhaigh Eo Yearbook was published in 1984. It was a tremendous success and great credit must go to the first editor Josephine Finnerty-Snee. She had been a lifelong member of the Association and took great pride in attending to every detail which was needed to make the book such a success. Twenty years later the yearbooks are much sought after and are quickly snapped up when they hit the shops, generally in time for the Christmas market. It is a book that is much appreciated by Mayo people all over the world who acquire it. People can readily identify with the news items, stories and photographs of places and people who are of interest to them.

The Chairman for the launch of the first Yearbook was Frank Fleming, former Mayo senior county footballer. Frank was, and remains, one of the longest serving members of Muintir Mhaigh Eo and is now honorary life president. On the occasion of his life presidency the then chairman, Frank Walsh paid glowing tribute to Frank Fleming for his tireless and dedicated work and indeed for the enjoyment he had given to so many

Mayo people as a footballer for the county.

It is a feature of Muintir Mhaigh Eo that there are so many people who have given unstintingly of their time and talent to the Association. Long service is nothing new to Mayo people in the cause of their county and, in Dublin, many people found they were able to do this service through Muintir Mhaigh Eo. Outstanding among those long-serving members are people like Sheila Gunning (president 1992-1994); Mary Fraine, who has held the most executive posts and is the longest serving secretary in the recent history of the association. Evelyn Davis and Helena Kelly (President 1994-1996) also deserve mention for their long term commitment.

In recent times the rules require that the association changes its executive every two years. This regular executive renewal contributes largely to maintaining a healthy, active and vibrant association. New members and especially young people, are essential to the life of any active body of people.

The executive and especially the Chairperson form the backbone of the association and are responsible for giving it direction. From my research and my first-hand knowledge I have never known an inferior chairperson or executive. However as time goes on more and more is expected. More and more demands are made on the free time of the officers. Success demands success. There is no relenting in so far as our peers in the society observe them.

During my two years as public relations officer (1991-1993) I can state without reservation that Paddy Moran was a chairman of exceptional talent. He was selected by his home town of Bonniconlon as Community Person of the Year in 1993... a recognition that was richly deserved. He followed ably in the footsteps of his predecessor Noel Howley which was no easy act to follow.

Every chairperson brings their own talents and abilities to the post and the changeover from one chairperson to the next is generally seamless with Frank Walsh succeeding quite fluidly in the footsteps of Paddy Moran.

Editors

As one who had the task of editing the association Yearbook I can vouch for the fact that it is a tough, if rewarding, assignment. It involves considerable work, not least in

sourcing material and the advertising without which a yearbook would not be possible. The association has been fortunate to have many fine and willing supporters of the Yearbooks and thanks is due to each and every one of them.

The people who have undertaken the task include;

1983/'88:	Ms Josephine Snee	1997/'98:	John Garavin
1989/'90:	Helena Kelly/Mary Fraine	1998/'99:	Helena Kelly
1990/'91:	Mary Fraine	1999/'00:	Helena Kelly
1991/'92:	Mary Fraine	2002/'01:	John F. Higgins
1992/'93:	Eamon De Búrca	2001/'02:	John F. Higgins
1993/'94:	Eamon De Búrca	2002/'03:	Helena Kelly
1994/'95:	Paddy Moran	2003/'04:	No publication
1995/'96:	Paddy Moran	2004/'05:	Centenary Publication
1996/'97:	John Garavin		

Gaeltacht Scholarships

For more than fifteen years now the association has been involved in a project to promote the Irish language. Part of the constitution of Muintir Mhaigh Eo, Áth Cliath commits the organisation to the development and promotion of Irish culture, including the Irish language.

The scholarship scheme was introduced in 1989 by the then Chairman Kieran O'Brien and has been run on behalf of the association by Evelyn Davis and Sheila Gunning. The scholarships are made tenable at the summer college in Aughleam thereby supporting a Mayo college and also helping to preserve the dialect and idiom of the distinctive north Mayo Gaeltacht.

Two scholarships are awarded each year and by a process of interview with school principals and teachers the grants are given to students interested in the Irish language and whose families might not be in a position to financially support their attendance at a Gaeltacht course. The scholarships are open to all and grantees need not necessarily have Mayo connections.

The scheme is monitored on an ad hoc basis and the evidence suggests that the

scholarships have proved successful with some of the participants bringing Irish back into the school yard while others have gone on to Third Level where they have taken Irish as a subject.

The association is content to fund the project and it is expected that it will continue to be an integral part of the work of Muintir Mhaigh Eo, Áth Cliath for many years to come.

1995 to 2005

In the decade since this history was originally published there have been huge changes in the country. A population that was static or in decline for most of the preceding decades has stabilised and begun to show growth. No longer is there mass emigration to the UK and the USA. Emigration, where it still happens, is a question of choice rather than necessity.

There are now more young people studying, going to Third Level education, working and living in the county than ever before. The emigration trend has reversed and it is not uncommon now to see people from outside the county and the country coming to Mayo seeking employment and putting down roots. I suppose former journalist John Healy and Mons James Horan would consider the change in present circumstances equivalent to a miracle of some kind.

Fr. Frank Fahey CC, Ballintubber, Mayo Person of the Year for 1994 launched the History of the Mayo Association, Dublin a decade ago and even in that short timeframe there have been huge changes and upheavals among people from all walks of life throughout the country and in the county.

Personal reputations, corporate bodies, politicians, public administrations have been scrutinised at a number of tribunals to an extent that would not have been possible a few short years ago. Openness and transparency have become by-words in public administration. The cobwebs have been blown away from many hidden, and perhaps shady, practices.

In the past ten years there have been yet more excellent and wonderful people honoured as Mayo Persons of the Year. Strangely enough during the period only one of those honoured was a woman- Mary Davis who received the award for her magnificent

organisation of the Special Olympics.

There have also been ten Meitheal Awards and despite concerns about the fall off in volunteerism the standard of the Meitheal Award winners continues to be very high reflecting the wonderful level of co-operation and community spirit that still exists in Mayo.

That spirit of commitment to Mayo is also seen in Muintir Mhaigh Eo, Áth Cliath where we continue to have members of sterling quality and long service. This is exemplified in the fact that two women members, Mary Fraine and Sheila Gunning continue to be active after more than forty years service each to the association.

As with every major organisation there are rows and lapses and Muintir Mhaigh Eo, Áth Cliath is no different. With all the celebrations and euphoria surrounding the millennium celebrations there was some excess of enthusiasm and the outcome was that a number of members resigned in protest at what they saw as shortcomings in the organisation.

It is a measure of the strength of the association that these “upheavals” which took a number of egms to resolve passed by without any obvious detriment to the organisation as a whole and with new procedures now in place the organisation is moving on and looking towards the next centenary celebrations.

The Western and National Press

Even though people often enjoy a love hate relationship with members of the Press, I have nothing but praise for them, especially those in the newspapers in Mayo. The Connaught Telegraph, The Western People and Mayo News, through their editors, reporters and photographers have all been very generous to our association whenever support was requested. The Western People has given extensive coverage to the association. Of course we have had another great ally in one of the best political journalists of our time, John Healy, now unfortunately gone from us, better known as Backbencher in the Irish Times and for many years a columnist with the Western People.

John Healy, journalist and author, was awarded Mayo Person of the Year in 1967. Jim Maguire, another distinguished newspaperman was honoured with the award in 1971.

And there is a man attached to the Western People who is known worldwide for his ability to capture the atmosphere, the excitement and colour of the Mayo Association Annual Ball. Henry Wills is, of course, the man in question. Henry was awarded the Press Photographers' Association prize in 1992 for his shot entitled "In the Mood" which subsequently featured in a television programme.

I would also like to thank those in the national Press who have been generous in covering Mayo Association events down through the years. They include Michael O'Toole of the Irish Press group, David Halloran of Independent Newspapers, Jim Dunne in the Irish Times and indeed many others. Journalists like Sean Staunton and Martin Curry in the Mayo News, Tom Courell, also regrettably gone to his eternal reward, Michael Commins and Terry Reilly and many others have done trojan work for the Mayo Association down the years.

One ingredient that never gets the recognition which it deserves is the generosity shown by sponsors of the association. They have made countless donations of substantial worth over the years and this has always resulted in some worthy cause receiving a handsome cheque from the association. The sponsors are the lifeline that keep the association going. In a commercial world, sponsors are the target of every non-profit making organisation. We in the Mayo association are very fortunate to have sponsors who have faith in us to do the correct thing with what we gain from their kindness.

I must make reference to one man, an exceptional individual and Mayo Person of the Year 1986, Mr. Val Gunning. I think Mr. Gunning has attended most of the Mayo functions, big and small, over the past decades. He has been a leading sponsor of the Mayo association and indeed of other deserving causes. His contribution and example is a model for us all to follow. Sheila Gunning sponsored a £2,000 music scholarship in 1993 to commemorate her term as President of the association from 1992 to 1994 and to coincide with the Mayo 5000 celebrations.

In more recent times local radio has played an important role in reporting the work of the association and our thanks go to Paul Claffey, Terry Reilly, Henry McGlade, Teresa O'Malley and Liamy McNally for the interest they show in our various projects. They keep Mayo and the mid-west very well informed about our activities and in some instances transmit our functions live from Dublin when we honour the Mayo Person of the Year at our annual dinner dance.

Adjudicators

Since the inception of the Mayo Person of the Year Award in 1964 and the Meitheal Awards in 1979 we have been blessed with the adjudicators who selected the winners.

It would not be possible to name them all but some I do remember and these include Deirdre Purcell, Pdraig O'hUigin, Michael Lyster, Sr Stanilaus Kennedy, Val Joyce, Pat Kenny, Gay Byrne, Ann Doyle, Eileen Dunne, Bibi Baskin, Paddy Duggan, Frank Feeley, Tom McCaughren, Eamon Coughlan and Mary Kennedy. We are indebted to these people. They give freely of their time and expertise and have always shown remarkable impartiality and an ability to get the "right" result.

Hopefully these events will continue into the future and be crowned with further success. The population of Ireland in 1991 was 3,525,219. That had increased in 2002 to 3,917,203. The Over 65 age group make up more than 11% of total population and this is predicted to be close on 50% in the next thirty years. Mayo shows a higher than national average of people over 65 and with the rapid increase in the growth of the number of people in this age group we are witnessing the greening and greying of our population at an alarming rate. Statisticians tell us there are more than 80 million people worldwide of Irish extraction. There are 42 million of them in the US; fifteen per cent of the population of New Zealand is of Irish descent and according to estimates there are 2.8 million people of Mayo descent scattered throughout the world.

After dropping dramatically for the best part of a century and a half the population of Mayo is presently showing an increase and while the rural population continues to show decline with people moving away from the land the upward trend is to be welcomed. The average family size in Mayo is 2.9 children, above the national average but much lower than in the middle of the last century. The day of the family of five, seven and even ten and more children is no more. Perhaps that's not a bad thing. It is more likely that families of one two and three children will be able to work and make a living in Mayo than would be the case with larger families.

We all want our county to prosper. I think it can and will. We do not want Mayo to be a wonderland, an outback or comfortable holiday home for retired Europeans who can relax while they study the financial papers and check their shares. We want a vibrant, growing and forward looking community, proud and confident in the future.

The future

If the youth of Mayo in the future choose to live and work in Mayo it will mean that our association in Dublin will miss their presence in the capital city. But our loss will be Mayo's gain and nobody will begrudge that outcome.

Somehow I feel there will always be a sprinkling of people from Mayo coming to Dublin. Muintir Mhaigh Eo, Áth Cliath is strong and vibrant. We have celebrated much in the past and shared our problems. We look now to the future with confidence.

We have had a successful world convention of Mayo Associations in Westport earlier this year and with improved air travel and a shrinking world, contacts with our brother organisations overseas will play a much greater part in the future of the association.

The next Mayo World Convention will be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina on March 2,3,4 & 5, 2007 to co-inside with the 150th Anniversary celebrations of the death in 1857 of Mayo man Admiral William Brown, founder of the Argentinian Navy and a native of Foxford.

Muintir Mhaigh Eo, Áth Cliath has achieved much in its century of existence. There is no reason to suppose that the Association's remit has been run. There will always be Mayo people and there will always be organisations to share the fellowship that is part and parcel of what we are..... Mayo people and proud.

Counties and countries with affiliated Mayo associations

Ireland	UK	USA	Canada	Australia
Athlone	Birmingham	Boston	Toronto	Sydney
Carlow	Coventry	Chicago		
Clonmel	Leeds	New York		
Cork	London	Philadelphia	Argentina	New Zealand
Dublin	Manchester	Cleveland	Buenos Aires	Auckland
Galway	Newcastle	Baltimore		
Kildare	Luton			
Louth/Meath	Halifax			
Limerick				
Sligo				