

My Grandfather is Thomas Hugh Corrigan (1890–1970). He was born in Owenduff and immigrated to Cleveland and became a Cleveland Policeman. In preparation for a family trip to Achill/West Mayo in 2017, I started doing research on family history. I was astounded when family from Mayo shared a 70–page memoir written by Brian Corrigan in 1970. I wish to share information I received from Brian’s unpublished memoirs, Pension application records, and stories handed down from family. My Grandfathers two brother's Brian and Hugh, his brother-in-law Anthony Keane, and my grandfather's Uncle Michael Gallagher and cousin John Gallagher were all involved in the War for Independence. There is an impressive Achill/West Mayo and Cleveland, Ohio connection. It is extraordinary the number of Irish here in Cleveland with connections to West Mayo. The stories of these five men and their connection with the War of Independence are remarkable and must be remembered for their sacrifices.

Brian Corrigan



Brian Corrigan was born in 1900 in Owenduff, Currain, Mayo to Hugh "Mor" Corrigan and Mary Gallagher Corrigan. Brian received a military service pension in respect of his service with the IRA in the service periods between April 1st, 1920 and September 1923 during the War of Independence, Truce period and Civil

War. He was awarded a Service Medal with Bar for service 1917 -1921. Brian Corrigan states that he joined the Tonragee Company, 2 Battalion, West Mayo Brigade, IRA in April 1919 under the command of Captain Patrick Lavelle. He was appointed Company Dispatch Rider. In 1920 Brian joined the Active Service Unit (ASU) comprised of 6 men from the Achill area of West Mayo. The Unit included himself, Captain Michael Moran, Thomas Lynchehan, John Gallagher, Austin O'Malley, Thomas Sweeney and James Sweeney. Brian stated that during the War of Independence he took part in disarming two RIC men; went up to 60 arms-raids on private homes; he cut telegraph wires and road blocked for the Kilmeena ambush in May 1921; and he road-blocked at Bunnahowna Bridge for Skirdagh which resulted in a running firefight with Crown Forces. Brian was promoted to Company Captain of Tonragee Company in May 1921 that comprised of 63 men. His home in Owenduff was used as a dispatch-centre, venue for IRA meetings and location for arms dump and dugouts.



Anthony Keane

On November 1st, 1922, an IRA column of twenty men left Newport and in the Brockagh/Fahy area were engaged by about two hundred and



fifty Free State soldiers, who were advancing from Westport. The IRA were under the command of Commandant Jack Connolly and seeing the strength of the Free State army, Connolly ordered a retreat. He himself, with two of his men, opened fire to enable his men to escape. In a short time, he was surrounded and captured. Having been disarmed, he was fired on at point blank range by a Free State officer but luckily, he missed. The officer then turned his attention to Anthony Keane, who was shot in the stomach. Arrested that day were Connolly, Anthony Keane, Mick Gibbons, Ned Murray and Pat Lyons. Pat Mulchrone, a local man, who was unarmed, was shot dead by the same Free State officer who shot Keane. Keane was taken to Castlebar Hospital, from where he escaped. Connolly and the rest were sent to Galway jail. Connolly later scaled the jail wall and escaped.

Hugh Corrigan



Brian's and my Grandfather's brother Hugh was known as "The Motorman"; and he drove trucks and other vehicles for the IRA. He was involved in the War for Independence and the IRA since he was young. In Brian's "Family Memoirs" he wrote that Hugh was home in Owenduff and the home was raided. They were looking

for Brian but took him out of the house to their lorry and beat him for information. Brian wrote that they beat him so badly their Mother, Mary Gallagher Corrigan, ran out of the house to help him and they hit her with a rifle and knocked her to the ground. Their sister Mary Corrigan Keane, married to Anthony Keane, then ran out and grabbed the soldier's rifle and shot at the ground near the soldier's feet. They then took Hugh into the Lorry and beat him badly; they stopped and told him to get out and run. Brian wrote that Hugh knew if he ran, they would have shot him in the back and reported that he was trying to escape. They beat him till he was lame and had serious facial injuries and then threw him out of the Lorry. He later immigrated to Cleveland, like his brother Patrick and my Grandfather Thomas. He drove buses and trolleys in Cleveland. Hugh's daughter Maureen lives in Arizona but comes to visit family in Cleveland often. She told me her father never spoke to her about the "Troubles" and told her he lost his teeth in a bar fight. I remember meeting Hugh in Cleveland, he came to my first communion party in the 70's and he had two sons that became firemen ,just like I became a fireman.

Michael Gallagher

Michael Gallagher, Bolinglana, Currane, Achill, joined the Irish Volunteers in 1917 and he took part in the usual activities. Michael John Gallagher



received a military service pension in respect of his service with the IRA for part of the periods between 1 April 1920 and 31 March 1923. His home/store was raided by British forces on several occasions. Says that he was arrested in November 1920 following a raid on his home. Claims that British forces stole his fowl and "slaughtered them along the road and let their blood spill along the route of the lorry in which I was a prisoner". Making those at home think it was his blood. Gallagher says that as a result his wife had a nervous breakdown and died on 29 June 1924. Michael says that he was released in January 1921 and rearrested in February 1921 where he was interned in Galway Jail and Rath Camp, County Kildare. Gallagher was released in December 1921. States that following his release he acted as a boat transport officer, conveying men on the run between Clare Island, Roonagh Point, Islandmore, Cloughmore and Achill. His grandson Edward Gallagher, in Cleveland, told me that they kept Michael in jail because they really wanted his son John. Edward said he was told that his grandfather knew they would eventually let him out, but they were not sure John would get out alive. So, John went on the run and immigrated to Cleveland under an alias name.

John Michael Gallagher



John Michael Gallagher is the son of Michael John Gallagher not to be confused with the John Gallagher who was Michael's company commander. John was on the run because of IRA activities up till July of 1921, and he had to leave the country, he came to Cleveland under an alias. John Michael Gallagher later was on the mounted unit of the Cleveland Police Department. His son Edward Gallagher told me the story:" My father left for America as Thomas Corrigan. When he told me, he had sailed as Thomas Corrigan, I asked him why. He answered, "Because I couldn't get Stanley Kowalski's papers." I finally caught on and said, "What if they're looking for Thomas Corrigan?" He said, "Well, then I have a dilemma. But they are definitely looking for John Gallagher"."

Now Stanley Kowalski was one of the main characters in Tennessee Williams' play "A Streetcar Named Desire". Marlon Brando played him in the movie version and had a famous scene where he yelled like a madman "Hey Stella!!!!!!".

Patrick Corrigan

Cleveland, Ohio

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