Radical and revolutionary movements in Ireland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are reputed to have been riddled with spies and informers. Their persistent influence helped to distract attention from other causes of failure. Weaknesses within movements, such as internecine strife among leaders, poorly-conceived strategies and exaggerated estimates of popular support, could be hidden behind an interpretation of events which placed responsibility for failure on a contingency that was normally beyond rebel control. In some respects, therefore, it was in the interests of Irish leaders, and sympathetic later commentators, to exaggerate the influence of spies and informers.1

Such conclusions are possible, however, only because commentators, both contemporary and modern, have failed to make a distinction between spies, being persons ‘engaged in covert information-gathering activities’, and informers, who are persons who happen to possess relevant information that they are persuaded to divulge.2 Admittedly, this distinction is not always clear-cut, for some who begin as informers subsequently agree to become spies. Moreover, from the point of view of the authorities, all information, however acquired, tends to be grist to their intelligence mill. Nevertheless, keeping this distinction clear can help to elucidate some of the problems facing revolutionary societies as they sought to keep their activities secret. It is unlikely, for example, that the United Irishmen in the 1790s were at greater risk from spies, as opposed to informers, than either the Jacobins or the Royalists in France in the same period. At no time could Dublin Town-Major Henry Sirr, or security chief Edward Cooke in Dublin Castle, call on the same security apparatus as was available to the police in Paris under the


Directory, with its 250 eavesdroppers (mouchards) scattered throughout the city. Nor does the surprisingly small amount of money spent on security from secret service funds in Britain and Ireland in this era suggest that spies were listening at every keyhole or skulking in every inn or tavern. The huge payouts to extremely important and useful agents such as John Cockayne, who received a final payment of £1,500 for accompanying the French secret agent William Jackson to Ireland in 1794, or to informants such as Thomas Reynolds, who received £5,000 for betraying the Leinster Executive of the United Irishmen in March 1798, have tended to distort interpretations of the costs of human intelligence sources in this era.

In the months leading up to the Rebellion in May 1798 the government obviously needed answers to several major questions: who were the leaders of the United Irishmen?; what were their plans for insurrection?; what links did they have with France?; and what was the date of the insurrection? But it also required low-grade information which could be collated and analysed to build up a coherent picture of the revolutionary movement and to round up subaltern agitators still on the loose (a very large number of those tried by court martial after the Rebellion were tried for offences committed before May 1798). A trickle of such information arrived in 1796-7; it flowed more freely in the months leading up to the Rebellion, as many of the counties were ‘dragooned’ by government forces who used very rough tactics; and became a veritable torrent after the Rebellion, too much, indeed, for the rather puny security intelligence apparatus, with Undersecretary Edward Cooke at its centre, to cope. Some important intelligence was received from well-placed deep-penetration agents like Leonard McNally, alias J.W., who was often used as defence counsel by prominent United Irishmen; or Francis Magan, a Dublin attorney whose information enabled the authorities to capture Lord Edward Fitzgerald; or Samuel Turner, alias Richardson and Roberts, who kept a close eye on United Irish machinations in Hamburg.

5 Cockayne’s final payment can be found in Home Office [Secret Service Payments] Notebook, 25 June 1798. He had previously been paid more than £300. As well as the £5,000, Reynolds received a pension of £1,000 per annum, with reversions. Altogether, he and his family received more than £47,000. Fitzpatrick, Secret Service Under Pitt, p.302.
6 See, for example, Cooke to Nugent, 6 August 1796, National Army Museum, London, Nugent Papers, NAM 6807/174, ff.155-6.
7 Thomas Bartlett, 'The Life and Opinions of Leonard MacNally (1752-1820), Playwright, United Irishman and Informer'. I am very grateful to Professor Bartlett for allowing me to see a draft of this paper. See also, Paul Weber, On the Road to Rebellion: The United Irishmen and Hamburg 1796-1803 (Dublin, 1997).
But, from 1797, Dublin Castle received most of its raw information from arrested suspects, who in normal circumstances would probably never have considered informing, but whose perilous positions offered them little alternative, if, that is, they wished to avoid either execution or transportation. Some resolutely refused to talk; others confessed but refused to give evidence against their compatriots; yet others went further, not only naming compatriots, but also agreeing to testify against them. All in theory can be classified as informers, or ‘stags’, as they were known at the time in Ireland. So, too, can the leading state prisoners, who gave the government a propaganda coup in July 1798 by publicly admitting their links with France and divulging their revolutionary strategy. The lord lieutenant, Marquess Cornwallis, thought that they had agreed to acknowledge their guilt, in return for their colleague Oliver Bond’s life being spared, because they feared he would turn informer: ‘he probably had it in his power to hang them’. But these informers, whether leaders, subalterns or small fry, were obviously different in kind from McNally or Turner. Their main objective was survival in an intolerable situation. To save their own skins they placed others in jeopardy. For many defeated and deflated rebels, informing – ‘turning the spit’ in the cant phrase – became a necessary survival mechanism, one which the government was to manipulate astutely at the tactical level.

This article seeks a window into the world of informing by examining the fortunes of William Maume (1778-1850), a subaltern United Irishman in County Cork who, following his arrest in May 1798, just before the Rebellion, used the strategy of informing in a desperate attempt to mitigate his punishment and to save his friends. His experiences demonstrate that the informing process could embrace complexity, calculation and contrivance. Maume is best known for being a prosecution witness at the court-martial trial of Francis Arthur, a wealthy and prominent Catholic merchant of Limerick, in June 1798. The trial was a cause célèbre. Arthur was found guilty, sentenced to a huge fine and transportation for life, but was subsequently allowed to banish himself to

8 For informers as ‘stags’, see Petition of Arthur Kain, State Prisoners’ Petitions, NLI SPP 675; Joseph Holt, A Rum Story. The Adventures of Joseph Holt: Thirteen Years in New South Wales 1800-1812, Peter O’Shaughnessy (ed.) (Kenthurst, 1988), p.44. Following Emmet’s Rebellion of 1803 informers were kept in what was called the ‘Stag-house’ opposite Kilmainham gaol. R.R. Madden, The Life and Times of Robert Emmet (New York, 1901), p.73.


10 Cornwallis to Ross, 29 July 1798 in Charles Ross (ed.), Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis (3 vols., London, 1859), ii, p.381.


12 For use of the cant term ‘turning the spit’ to denote informing, see Memoirs of Miles Byrne, edited by his widow (Shannon, 1972), p.29.
England. One of the objectives of this article is to re-examine the Arthur case and, at least in part, to rehabilitate Maume’s reputation.

This study is based on Irish sources that have previously gone either unrecognised or un-remarked, including the statements Maume made while in military custody and his intercepted letters. Two other manuscript sources have been particularly useful: a journal kept by John Washington Price, surgeon of the convict ship Minerva; and a long manuscript autobiography written in the United States many years after the Rebellion by the Ulster United Irishman John Caldwell.\footnote{‘A Journal kept on board the Minerva Transport from Ireland to New South Wales, by J.W. Price, Surgeon of sd. Ship’, British Library, BL Add MS 13880. Price’s MS journal has recently been transcribed and published. Pamela Jeanne Fulton (ed.), The Minerva Journal of John Washington Price (Melbourne, 2000). Good use of Price’s journal was first made by Ruán O’Donnell, Marked for Botany Bay: The Wicklow United Irishmen and the Development of Political Transportation from Ireland, 1791-1806, Ph.D. (Australian National University, 1996); John Caldwell, ‘Particulars of [the] History of a North County Irish Family’, PRO NI T3541/5/3.}

While on the Minerva, Maume wrote an account of his experiences as a leader of the United Irishmen, which Price incorporated into his journal. Caldwell was present in Cork in late 1798, blown in from the Atlantic by heavy storms, when he met Maume. Used in conjunction with sources from Australia, an assessment of the role that informing had on Maume’s career is now possible.

Maume’s story is, moreover, instructive for a number of other reasons. It offers new, if unverifiable, information on the underground roles played by both Lord Edward Fitzgerald and John Philpot Curran in the months leading up to the Rebellion; it sheds light on the authorities’ counter-insurgency policy during the Rebellion, demonstrating both its strengths and its weaknesses; it offers insights into some of the dilemmas facing imprisoned rebels caught in a vortex from which they struggled to free themselves; and it shows that these dilemmas were not resolved by transportation to Botany Bay. For Maume, as for many others, informing became part of the convict experience.

II

William James Maume (or Maum or Maugham) was born in Charleville, now Rath Luirc, County Cork in 1778. Very little is known of his early life, except that he had a father and a brother living in 1798.\footnote{Maume to Sylvester O’Shea, 3 June 1798, NLI MS 50069.} An uncle, Counsellor Kellar, paid for his studies at Trinity College, Dublin, which Maume left in 1796, without graduating.\footnote{Australian Dictionary of Biography, II, p.216. Con Costello, Botany Bay: The Story of the Convicts Transported from Ireland to Australia 1791-1853 (Dublin, 1996), p.40, claims that Maume was a Catholic.} There is no evidence to demonstrate that he was involved in radical politics while at the college, although in 1794-5 there were, in Dublin, some shadowy but militant secret societies that included among their adherents young men from Cork, including John Sheares, who financed the societies, and...
John Daly Burk, like Maume a former student at Trinity.\(^\text{16}\) It is possible that Maume got his first taste of revolutionary politics there.

Leaving Dublin, Maume took employment as an usher, or assistant teacher, at the school of Rev William Dunn in Charleville, where he taught Latin and Greek.\(^\text{17}\) According to his own account, recorded by Price, Maume was sworn into the United Irishmen by one Brown at Edenderry, at the instigation of Cork United Irish leader John Sheares. This would have been at about the time that he left Trinity, for he first met Lord Edward Fitzgerald in the summer of 1796 and thereafter was in contact with him on virtually every occasion that he visited Dublin.\(^\text{18}\) Despite his youth, Maume was soon given an influential role in organising a strong United Irish presence in Charleville and the surrounding baronies in Counties Cork and Limerick. In the spring of 1798 he was officially commissioned by the United Irishmen as ‘Commandant of the Baronies of Orrery and Kilmore.’\(^\text{19}\)

The province of Munster was not to be a cockpit of rebellion in 1798, but in the period before the uprising in Kildare it was as disaffected as many of the regions that were to rise.\(^\text{20}\) In 1796, United Irish emissaries from Ulster began to traverse the province, using long-standing grievances in the countryside to gain as many as 15,000 sworn recruits by the autumn.\(^\text{21}\) Munster had a tradition of agrarian unrest stretching back to the beginnings of Whiteboyism in the 1760s. Taxes, tithes, rents and the perennial sore of Protestant ownership of land were burning issues among the peasantry which were exacerbated by the social consequences of economic modernisation that occurred in the second half of the century.\(^\text{22}\) For the middle-class United Irishmen, whose ideology was influenced by modern Enlightenment economic theory and French revolutionary ideals, this traditional, barely-politicised peasant disaffection offered an opportunity to create a mass-based revolutionary organisation. There were dangers to this approach, for, whereas the more moderate United Irish leaders sought political rather than social revolution, reliance on the peasantry raised the possibility that victory would lead to widespread social upheaval and the promotion of sectarian conflict. That is one reason why the moderates, led by Thomas Addis Emmet and


\(^\text{17}\) Sworn statement of John Ellard, 28 June 1798, NLI MS 5006/29.


\(^\text{19}\) Maume’s Statement, n.d, NLI MS 5006/28.

\(^\text{20}\) Report of the Secret Committee of the Irish House of Commons (Dublin, 1798), pp.11-2; Extracts of letters, April 1798, PRO HO100/76, ff.43-6.


William James McNeven, preferred to restrain rebellion until a French army had landed. The French, it was rather optimistically hoped, would act as a force for order. 23

By the end of 1797, however, within the United Irish leadership there emerged a more militant group which believed that an insurrection could be successful without French aid. At its head was Arthur O'Connor, the grandson of a very rich Cork businessman and nephew of the County Cork aristocrat, Lord Longueville. It was he who persuaded Lord Edward Fitzgerald to take command of the military wing of the United Irishmen. 24 Other Corkmen, such as the Sheares brothers, John and Henry, were equally militant. There were even United Irishmen in Cork city who sympathised with the peasants' social agenda. Until his arrest in 1797 and the destruction of his newspaper, the Cork Gazette, Denis Driscoł had promoted the idea of an agrarian law. 25 In his Address to the Patriots of Imokilly the woollen draper, John Swiney, who was Maume's liaison officer in Cork city until his arrest, made 'a determined effort to fuse the older Whiteboy/Rightboy and newer radical traditions, to politicise poverty, and to develop a comparative framework'. Like John Daly Burk, Driscoł and Maume himself, he was fiercely anti-clerical. 26

Maume's main task was to prepare his region for an uprising. He followed two main strategies: organise arms raids in the countryside; and suborn the military units stationed in his area. To deepen his cover and to deflect suspicion, he joined a local yeomanry regiment. 27 His orders came from a secret committee in Cork city, the membership of which included Edmund, Francis and John


26 Whelan, 'Bantry Bay', p.118. Swiney was a state prisoner in Dublin from May 1798 until 1802, when he was banished for life. He was part of the Irish community in France and was arrested for a while during the general purge of foreigners in Paris before the renewal of war in 1803. Later that year, after the failure of Emmet's Rebellion, he spent several months in Cork as a French agent. Back in France in 1804, he killed Thomas Corbet in a duel and subsequently emigrated to the United States. By 1810, he was back in France with his French wife, who was related by marriage to Bonaparte's great rival, General Moreau. Elliott, Partners in Revolution, pp.306, 318, 337; Irish Letters from America, PRONI D1759/3B/6; William McNeven to David Bailie Warden, 12 March 1810, Maryland Historical Society, David Bailie Warden Papers. For Maume's anti-clericalism, see Maume to Sylvester O'Shea, 3 June 1798, NLI MS 5006/9.

O’Finn, John Swiney, the Cork watchmaker Timothy Conway, and the Sheares brothers, when they were not in Dublin. Maume’s account in Price’s journal emphasises the Cork committee’s ruthless determination to eradicate all political opposition in the countryside. They ‘tried all offences (as they were called) against the union of Irishmen’ and adopted every means ‘to terrify the active magistrates and prevent them from the discharge of their duty’.  

Maume’s memoir fleshes out some of the results of the committee’s orders. In early February 1798 they ordered the execution of Colonel Richard St George, who had come up from County Galway to visit his estate in Cork. A veteran of the American war, who sensibly travelled with an armed bodyguard, St George was the only active magistrate in the whole mountainous region between Cork and Tipperary. Angered by tree felling (for pikes) and other depredations committed at night by the United Irishmen/Defenders on his Cork estate, he had threatened to burn the houses of his own tenants whom he suspected. In response, he was brutally murdered with a rusty scythe while staying at the home of his neighbours, the Uniackes, near Kilworth. Uniacke himself was also a target, for the United Irishmen had secretly chosen him to take a command in their forces and, by hosting St George, he had come under suspicion of offering information. He too was therefore murdered and his wife thrown down the stairwell onto stone slabs. The fourteen men involved in the murders were led by ‘Captain Doe’, who turned out to be one Joseph Burnston. He was subsequently hanged on a temporary gallows on the Parade in Cork in June 1798, convicted by court martial ‘of crimes at which human nature shudders to reflect on’.  

The outrage at the Uniackes was only one of a growing number of violent home invasions by face-blackened hordes seeking arms that occurred in Munster in the late winter and early spring of 1798. The role played by the United Irishmen in organising these attacks has hitherto remained unclear but, in letters intercepted by the authorities when he was in custody, Maume hinted that he had been involved in at least one arms raid, across the border of Limerick in Bruff at the house of a Mr Gubbins. On 26 March Gubbins had written to Dublin Castle, ‘My house was broken into last night by a banditti of several hundreds, and my arms taken away. I got a severe pulling and dragging, and had many a gun and blunderbuss presented to my breast. I know not what my loss is yet. When we have no arms’, he ended despairingly, ‘everything will be taken from us’.  

The pitiless nature of the Cork committee’s policy of terror and assassination is exemplified by a decision it supposedly took at a meeting in early May in the house of Thomas Conway at Sunday’s Well, a suburb of Cork. Conway was an

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28 Ibid., f.22.
29 Pakenham, Year of Liberty, pp.40-1; Dublin Evening Post, 30 June 1798; Price, ‘Minerva Journal’, f.22.
30 Extracts of letters from the south of Ireland, March 1798, PRO HO100/80, ff.154-6.
31 Maume to [Captain Batwell], 13 June 1798, NLI MS 5006/16; Maume to ?, 13 June 1798, NLI MS 5006/17; Gubbins to ?, 26 March 1798, PRO HO 100/80, f.158.
ardent Francophile; his house was called ‘Jemappes’, after the revolutionary victory of 1792, and his son was called Buonaparte. (Such enthusiasm did not prevent Conway from becoming an informer in 1799.)32 According to Maume, Lord Edward Fitzgerald attended the meeting, which had been called to make final insurrection plans. He was thus present when John Finn proposed that the Catholic bishop of Cork, Dr James Moylen, should be assassinated and the blame placed on the local Orangemen. Such a blow ‘would instantaneously excite the lower orders to acts of desperacy (sic.), as the most sanguine Protestant could not attach the perpetration of the above murder to a Roman Catholic’. The committee, when no-one around the table said anything in Moylen’s favour, ‘consigned him to that fate, which must necessarily await all enemies to their country’.33

The veracity of Maume’s accusation is difficult to determine. He must have received the information at second hand, possibly from Fitzgerald himself, who, claims Maume, travelled to Charleville after he had hurriedly left Cork with the local sheriff on his scent. There is no evidence, however, that Moylen was targeted, although the short time between the decision being made and the disruption of the United Irishmen’s activities may perhaps explain that. Moylen certainly was a thorn in the United Irishmen’s side. He claimed to have been threatened in the past, particularly following his anti-French pastoral address published in the aftermath of the abortive descent on Bantry Bay in December 1796. He had, moreover, just issued another pastoral address just days before the Cork committee met. In it, he had condemned the ‘evils’ of illegal oaths and the associations of ‘atheistical incendiaries’, urged his flock to remain loyal to king and government, and warned against men ‘in sheep’s clothing, exaggerating, and then pretending to feel your grievances; but they are inwardly ravening wolves’.34

Heightening the fears of the peasantry and townspeople by exaggerating the threat from Orangemen was certainly a tactic used by the United Irishmen, including Maume and his ‘lads of Charleville’.35 One of the charges brought against Maume was his authorship of a handbill, distributed in Charleville and signed ‘An Avenger’, in which an attack on the town was forecast and loyalists threatened with ‘the fate of St George’.36 Their prime targets, however, were local yeomen and the soldiers of the Leitrim Militia, stationed at Mallow and Charleville. Most of the Leitrim regiment was Catholic, although there were a

32 Castlereagh to Wickham, Most Secret, 2 April 1799, PRO HO 100/86, f.242.
35 Maume to Richard Peppard, n.d [29 May 1798], NLI MS 5006/36. For the Orange card being played by the United Irishmen, see Report of the Secret Committee ... 1798, pp.12-3; Liam Chambers, Rebellion in Kildare 1790-1803 (Dublin, 1998), p.69.
few Protestants, all of whom, claimed Maume, were 'rigid Orangemen'. In Mallow, where English artillery units were stationed, the United Irishmen had made little headway. However, Maume successfully swore in most of the two companies of the Leitrim Militia stationed in his home town, then produced a fictitious and ferocious Orange oath which was spread among the Leitrim companies in Mallow. The result was simmering tension between the English and the Irish, which culminated in a pitched battle that led to loss of life.37

The results of Maume's suborning are difficult to judge. Lord Edward Fitzgerald praised him for his success, but in the only battle in which the Leitrim Militia were involved during the Rebellion, at Ballygullen in Wexford on 5 July, they performed well. However, in the following months, while they were stationed at Rathdrum trying to mop up resistance in County Wicklow, there were seventeen desertions. It was said that these resulted from local rebels administering oaths, but the influence of Maume might still have been lingering.38

While awaiting transportation in Cork later in the year, Maume was pointed out as 'the tool' of the notorious Tipperary flogging magistrate, Thomas Judkin Fitzgerald.39 He could equally have been stigmatised as the tool of Lord Edward Fitzgerald. One of the more intriguing disclosures in Maume's memoir, confirmed by his intercepted letters, is the presence of Lord Edward in Counties Waterford and Cork in late April and May 1798. Hitherto, historians have accepted that between 12 March 1798, when the Leinster Executive was anested at Oliver Bond's house in Dublin, and his arrest on 19 May, Fitzgerald remained hidden in safe houses in Dublin.40 A tradition in Cork, however, traceable back to Mary Aikenhead, founder of the Irish Sisters of Charity and the daughter of an United Irishman, that places Fitzgerald at the Sunday's Well meeting, appears to be correct.41 According to Maume, Fitzgerald stayed at the Hole in the Wall inn in Waterford before travelling to Cork, where he remained concealed 'for some time'. He then appeared in Charleville on 8 May, where he gave Maume the date of the insurrection (24 May), told him only to obey the instructions of John Sheares and ordered him, when the insurrection had begun, to seize all the military stores, artillery and horses in Charleville and take them into the country, where he was to dig trenches across the roads and harass the army. Maume successfully got Fitzgerald out of Charleville and on to the Limerick road at night by dressing in his yeomanry uniform and obtaining a pass from an officer of the

37 Ibid., f.23.
39 Caldwell, 'North County Family', p.123.
40 Tillyard, Citizen Lord, p.252.
41 O'Coindealbháin, 'The United Irishmen in County Cork', i, p.127.
Midlothian Fencible cavalry.42

Unless Maume, for some inexplicable reason, was trying to magnify his role in the United Irishmen to his captors in Limerick and to surgeon Price, there seems to be no reason to disbelieve his comments on Fitzgerald. If they are correct, two further points can be raised. The first relates to the views, held by Marianne Elliott among others, that in the weeks leading up to the Rebellion the United Irish Dublin leadership was totally disorganised and that Fitzgerald had remained undecided on the date for the uprising right up to the time of his arrest.43 Maume’s evidence suggests that the date had been fixed at the Sunday’s Well meeting, if not before, and that, although the arrests of the Leinster Executive had certainly seriously disrupted the organisation, Fitzgerald, by travelling around the south, was still capable of keeping the conspiracy together.

The second point relates to the intractable problem of John Philpot Curran’s role, if any, in the conspiracy. As a distinguished Whig parliamentarian and barrister, he had defended United Irishmen in the courts and had been a consistent proponent of the soft liberal principles that the more sophisticated United Irishmen used as a cover for their own agenda. At worst, he has been seen as a fellow traveller who, with other prominent Whigs such as Henry Grattan and the Ponsonbys, represented ‘that broad alliance of English and Irish Whigs and respectable (sic.) United Irishmen which provided the acceptable façade of Irish radicalism’.44 At best, he may be seen as akin to one of Lenin’s ‘useful idiots’. Certainly, the government had its suspicions, supported by the dubious comment from a spy that if the raid on Bond’s house had taken place two hours later Curran would have been present.45

Maume’s information on Curran relates to a meeting they had at Scrag’s hotel during the spring assizes in Cork. Curran had discussed with him Lord Edward Fitzgerald’s plans for raising money from wealthy locals, including Francis Arthur of Limerick, encouraged Maume to carry out Fitzgerald’s orders in his region of responsibility and handed over a commission which, claimed Maume, Curran had been given by Fitzgerald:

And then Mr Curran opened a great Pocket Book, out of which he drew three pieces of parchment one of which was for me, which was my Commission as Commandant of the Baronies of Ossory (sic.) and Kilmore – it was like a Free Masons Certificate edged around with Green, – my unremitting endeavours in the advancement of a reform and my pure Patriotism were therein specified etc – it was dated Dublin 2 March in the first year of Union Ascendancy.46

Yet, despite this, and although the distinguished historian Louis Cullen has

42 Price, ‘Minerva Journal’, f.24; Maume to [Captain Batwell], 13 June 1798, NLI MS 5006/16.
43 Elliott, Partners in Revolution, p.199.
44 Curtin, United Irishmen, p.217.
45 Spy’s Report, March 1798, PRO HO100/76, ff.11-4. The spy was a Frenchman or French speaker, possibly Count Mumford.
46 Maume’s Statement [to Colonel Darby?], nd (but pre-21 June 1798), NLI MS 5006/28.
recently suggested that ‘Grattan’s ties with the United Irishmen and the general recklessness of Whig behaviour and language well merit close examination’, Curran should, in this case, be given the benefit of the doubt. Maume’s references to Curran come in his Limerick confessions; he fails to mention him in his memoir. As we shall see below, he probably used Curran’s name in a vain attempt to deflect attention from Francis Arthur.

III

On 11 May, just a day or two after Fitzgerald had departed Charleville and eight days before the charismatic leader was to be fatally wounded in Dublin, Maume was arrested on a charge of high treason. The subsequent trajectory and tenor of his life are partly explained by the fact that he had been betrayed. Edward Sanders, a Charleville baker, had denounced both Maume and his friends, accusing them of distributing the ‘Avenger’ handbill and of suborning local yeomanry units. According to Maume, Sanders was deep in the conspiracy himself and ‘exceedingly guilty’. Under interrogation by yeomanry captains (and local magistrates) Roberts and Batwell, and his employer, Rev Dunn, Maume attempted to deflect attention from his fellow conspirators Richard Pepperd, a local printer, John Barry, Dennis Linehan and Paul Lillis (‘a mere boy’), by acknowledging his guilt, although he held back what he knew about the Cork United Irish organisation and failed to mention the date of the proposed insurrection. He did, however, inform Roberts, an officer in the Charleville Cavalry, of a plan to murder another local yeomanry commander, Captain Harrison. Rather than face trial in Cork on a charge of administering unlawful oaths that carried the death penalty – Maume volunteered for general service overseas in the army. Public humiliation followed when he was ordered to confess his crimes before his yeomanry corps.

In the immediate aftermath of his arrest, therefore, Maume acted honourably: he had taken the responsibility for local United Irish activity, leaving his friends under suspicion but free; he had limited the information he had given; and he had volunteered for military service to avoid a trial at which more important intelligence might have come out and other conspirators implicated. There the matter may have rested, a minor incident at a time when much more serious events were occurring elsewhere. However, the agreement which Maume thought he had made at his interrogation was broken by Roberts and another local magistrate, Bruce, who ordered Maume to Duncannon Fort in Waterford, not as a

49 Maume to Major-General Edward Morrison, 19 June 1798, NLI MS 5006/24.
51 Maume to ?, 13 June 1798, NLI MS 5006/17.
recruit but as an involuntary ‘convict for Transportation’ to Botany Bay.  

For Maume, this decision was a disaster (and another betrayal). Languishing in Charleville gaol, and still uncertain about the status of the pact he had made to protect his friends, he decided to use the one arrow left in his quiver, his knowledge of Lord Edward Fitzgerald’s plans for the region. On 20 May he wrote to Major-General Henry Johnson, then stationed at Doneraile. Expressing his repentance, he offered his ‘services to [his] Sovereign, as the only atonement and compensation in [his] power to make up for [his] temporary want of allegiance’. Johnson ordered him to Doneraile, where he was interrogated by the general and Lord Doneraile. What he told them remains unknown, but it was sufficiently useful for Doneraile to promise him enlistment in the 17th Regiment of Foot, of which he was lieutenant-colonel.  

On 25 May Maume set off, with a cavalry escort, to Clonmel, en route for Duncannon Fort, where recruits for the army were being concentrated. During the journey, whether by chance or by calculation, Maume mentioned to the officer, Captain Evans, that he knew an insurrection was planned for that day. By the time they reached Clonmel, news had already arrived of rebellion having broken out in Leinster. Immediately, Maume’s significance as a potential source of intelligence increased considerably: ‘every person entertained great ideas of the importance of the contents of my mind’. Instead of remaining under close guard, he twice had interviews with General St John and Sheriff Thomas Judkin Fitzgerald, once at the house of a local banker, then in an inn. On the following day, after considering their offer overnight – the flogging of a Mr Fox, who confessed to having had a similar subaltern relationship to Lord Edward Fitzgerald as himself, may have concentrated his mind – Maume agreed to give an exact account of his last conversation with Fitzgerald. In return, Judkin Fitzgerald and St John agreed to ‘exert themselves in my favour, and of my friends’.  

Strangely, just as Maume was betraying Fitzgerald, Fitzgerald from beyond the grave unwittingly betrayed Maume. An express arrived in Clonmel from Lord Castlereagh, then acting chief secretary in Dublin, ordering Maume to Dublin Castle immediately. The papers seized following Fitzgerald’s capture had included ‘a muster’, in which Maume was recorded as holding ‘a very exalted commande’ in Counties Cork and Limerick. He was needed in Dublin to explain the meaning of Fitzgerald’s secret ‘signs’. By now, however, the route to Dublin was blocked; Maume and his guard could get no further than Carlow, where they viewed heaps of bodies lying in the streets, over which their horses had to step.

52 Ibid.  
54 NLI MS 5006/16; NLI MS 5006/17; Price, ‘Minerva Journal’, f.26; Maume to Christopher Townsend, 6 June 1798, NLI MS 5006/11.
They returned to Clonmel, from where Judkin Fitzgerald sent Maume to Limerick, to give information to Major-General Edward Morrison.55 Maume was at pains in his memoir to insist that until his arrival in Limerick, on 29 May, neither he, nor any of his interrogators, had mentioned the name of Francis Arthur. By the end of the year a rumour was circulating, picked up by John Caldwell in Cork, that Maume had been induced to give court-martial evidence against Arthur by Judkin Fitzgerald.56 The rumour was given greater credibility by the historian Francis Plowden, who, in 1810, accused Fitzgerald of tampering with Maume to convict Arthur.57 In reality, however, the conspiracy against Arthur was confined to Limerick; Maume was, at least at first, its unwitting initiator. According to Maume, in his statement relating to his last conversation with Lord Edward Fitzgerald, which had been sent to Limerick, Fitzgerald had mentioned the name of a local doctor, Dr Hargrove. He had been arrested; his friend, Arthur, was also arrested. There was, claimed Maume, ‘no charge whatsoever against [Arthur], but his acquaintance with Dr Hardgrove (sic.).’58 That was soon to change. In Maume’s words, Arthur was to become the victim of ‘private pique and animosity’.59

In the first days of the Rebellion, when fears of uprisings throughout the region spread like wildfire amongst loyalists, Arthur became an obvious scapegoat. He was rich, Catholic and he had been politically active. He was part of a wider group of Catholic mercantile extended families stretching from Cork to Limerick, whose wealth and social eminence seemed to threaten Protestant hegemony.60 Arthur became the bête noire of a group of militant Protestants, who took their lead from the irascible but powerful John Fitzgibbon, earl of Clare, then lord chancellor of Ireland. Clare was to play no role in the Arthur trial, for he was in Dublin during this period, but his fellow Protestants in Limerick had had Arthur in their sights since 1792. Towards the end of that year an influential group of Limerick freeholders had denounced the proposed national Catholic Convention, comparing it with the French National Assembly and warning that

56 Caldwell, ‘North County Family’, p.123.
59 Ibid., f.25.
60 Kavanaugh, John Fitzgibbon, earl of Clare, p.5. The Roche family was part of this Catholic network in Cork and Limerick. When Maume finally gave full information on Lord Edward’s contacts in the region, he named a Mr Roche of Cork. An Edmund Rosche (sic.) was acquitted at a Cork court martial later in the year. Maume to Colonel Darby, 7 June 1798, NLI MS 5006/13; NLI MS 5006/16; [Colonel Littlehales] to General Myers, 5 October 1798, PRO HO100/86, ff.72-3.
Catholic activism would lead to 'a renewal of those religious animosities which so long and so unhappily disturbed this country'.\(^{61}\) The Catholics were led by 'turbulent and seditious men', one of whom was Francis Arthur.\(^{62}\) As Edward Cooke later succinctly summarised Arthur's situation in the 1790s, 'He had been active in promoting the measures which had been taken for procuring through Parliament a complete repeal of all the restrictive laws against the Catholics, which was natural and surely not blameable, and this activity had produced him enemies in the Protestant party of Limerick'.\(^{63}\) According to Maume, 'There was a faction formed against him, by a number of gentlemen in Limerick, particularly such as had acquaintances in Charleville'.\(^{64}\) By 1798, Arthur had compounded his unpopularity by daring to become captain of a local yeomanry artillery corps.\(^{65}\) When evidence was found that local yeomanry units had been penetrated by the United Irishmen, Arthur naturally fell under suspicion.

There was, however, no evidence linking Arthur to the United Irishmen. The arrival of Maume in Limerick on the same day Arthur had been arrested thus seemed providential. As a man who apparently possessed full information on the local United Irish organisation, and whose intelligence on proposed French invasion plans was being couriered to Lord Portland in the Home Office in London, Maume would certainly be able to implicate Arthur.\(^{66}\) Unfortunately, Maume would not oblige. Not only did he refuse when asked by his military inquisitors to incriminate Arthur on 29 May, but he also secretly sent a letter to Richard Pepperd in Charleville in which he surreptitiously asked him to warn Arthur's friends. In the guise of giving Pepperd the latest news, Maume wrote, 'I was asked if I knew Mr Hargrove. I declared I never spoke to him in my life much less to Mr Arthur, who it seems were likewise nominated in his Lordship's muster'.\(^{67}\) This letter, when submitted as evidence at Arthur's trial, was to save his life.

The warning to Pepperd is not the only evidence supporting the view that Maume, up to a point, tried his best to assist Arthur. As mentioned above, he attempted to divert attention from him by implicating Curran in the conspiracy, a hint which, strangely, the authorities ignored. In a sworn statement on 5 June, when he was under enormous pressure to denounce Arthur, he claimed that his name had come up only in a conversation with Swiney and not with Lord Edward Fitzgerald.\(^{68}\) If nothing else, Maume seemed determined not to link Arthur with Fitzgerald.

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62 Ibid., pp.253-4.
63 Cooke to Sir George Shee, 29 July [1803], PRO HO100/117, f.35.
65 *Dublin Evening Post*, 30 June 1798.
66 Colonel Foster to Lieutenant-General Sir James Stewart, 28 May 1798, Camden to Portland, 2 June 1798, PRO HO100/77, ff. 17, 13-4.
67 Maume to Pepperd (copy), [29 May 1798], NLI MS 5006/36.
68 Maume’s sworn statement before magistrate W. Corkhill, 5 June 1798, NLI MS 5006/10.
Moreover, although it was not mentioned in the trial transcript, which was so badly compiled that Castlereagh later complained of its inadequacy, Maume gave some detailed testimony that Arthur’s defence counsel was subsequently easily able to discredit.\textsuperscript{69} Maume claimed that Lord Edward had given him letters addressed to Arthur in Dublin on the day that Peter Finnerty, editor of the United Irish newspaper \textit{The Press}, was pilloried. This happened on 30 December 1797.\textsuperscript{70} He also testified that he did not deliver the letters to Arthur’s house until 17 February, seven weeks later. Although defence counsel was not given the opportunity to submit some of the evidence at the trial, it was a relatively straightforward task for him to find five witnesses, including Rev Dunn and James Gubbins of Kenmare Castle, to prove that Maume was in Church Town, a small village south of Charleville, and not Dublin, on 30 December. Defence counsel also claimed to have evidence to prove that Arthur was in Dublin on an extended visit on 17 February.\textsuperscript{71} Two questions arise from Maume’s evidence: why did he give such a specific date for his meeting with Fitzgerald, when he knew he was in County Cork at that time? And why did it take so long for him to deliver the letters? Given that there is solid evidence to show that Maume had previously tried to warn Arthur of his dangerous situation, it seems reasonable to conclude that, in his trial evidence, he also attempted to create opportunities for the defence to undermine his testimony.

Such subterfuge was necessary, for Maume had been forced into bearing false witness against Arthur at his trial on 23 and 25 June. Despite having exposed Fitzgerald’s plans in his statement written in Clonmel, on his arrival in Limerick on 29 May he was still under orders for transportation and his friends in Charleville were still threatened with arrest. At some point in the next few days he surrendered to the blandishments of his inquisitors, General Morrison and Colonel Darby of the 54th Regiment. At this point, the military were more concerned with obtaining information on the United Irishmen’s organisation in the whole region, rather than seeking evidence against Arthur. On 3 June, Maume informed a friend in Charleville that his family ‘will again shortly see me far superior in situation to that in which I left’.\textsuperscript{72} On 5 June, Maume made his sworn statement referring to Swiney’s conversation in the spring, that men of property were supporting the conspiracy. Among others, Arthur’s name – for the first time – was mentioned.\textsuperscript{73} On that same day, Maume’s sentence was revoked and he was formally ‘acquitted of all the heinous offences which before stigmatized me; [I] am confident of obtaining as an undeserved reward from my treasonable practices an important place of trust under government’.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{69} Castlereagh to Morrison, 2 July 1798, NLI MS 5006/33.
\textsuperscript{70} ‘Observations upon the Evidence on the Trial of Francis Arthur, Esq,’ NLI MS 5006/1-3a.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.; Petition of Ellen Arthur, 3 July 1798, NLI MS 5006/4-5.
\textsuperscript{72} Maume to Sylvester O’Shea, 3 June 1798, NLI MS 5006/9. This letter was intercepted.
\textsuperscript{73} NLI MS 5006/10.
\textsuperscript{74} NLI MS 5006/11.
Over the next few days he continued to eke out to the authorities the names of conspirators in Cork: Mr Roche, who was supposedly to give the signal to suborned troops to destroy the Cork harbour batteries, and a Mr Colles, of Tralee Bay. His justification at the time, confessed to an unknown correspondent in a letter that was intercepted, was, ‘I have given information but mine tended to the very existence of Munster which you will shortly hear and the salvation of Cork and its garrisons and the prevention of the most unprecedented barbarities’. He expected at any moment to hear that the charges had been dropped against his friend John Barry. ‘Assure the lads in Charleville’, he wrote on 15 June, ‘that no person has done more for them than [me].’

Whatever satisfaction Maume may have felt for the way he had played his cards was rudely shattered on Sunday, 17 June, when he received two notes from Morrison. The first abruptly demanded information on five Charleville suspects, including Barry, Lillis and Linehan. The second sought the names of the persons in Charleville to whom he had delivered letters four months before. Maume’s blustering replies – that it would be dishonourable to injure his friends on whose behalf he had given away secrets and that he had never delivered any letters – led to a swift and brutal response. He was thrown out of his quarters in the barracks and placed under guard in a tent. A Lieutenant Louis told him, falsely, that his friends had been arrested and that on the following day he would be flogged while watching Barry’s execution. Having been allowed to brood on this for a few hours, Captain Brand – Morrison’s aide-de-camp – came to the tent and advised Maume that ‘all would be well’ if only he would acknowledge giving Arthur letters from Fitzgerald. At dinner that evening Colonel Garden slyly asked him, ‘what was Arthur’s fate compared with friends?’ This eighteenth-century version of the ‘good cop, bad cop’ routine worked; Maume agreed to testify against Arthur. With Garden’s help, he concocted a charge from a newspaper report.

Once again Maume tried to warn Arthur’s supporters, by writing to Pepperd with an account of the testimony that would be given at the trial. This time, however, the letter was intercepted. At the same time, Maume tried to muddy the waters and extract a modicum of revenge against his original persecutors by informing Morrison that Roberts and Bruce were not such stout loyalists as they appeared. In the previous months they had received solid information on those who had attacked Gubbins’ house and knew how many of Harrison’s yeomanry corps had taken the United Irish oath, which had been administered by Sanders the baker, Maume’s nemesis. Yet they had failed to act against the United

75 NLI MS 5006/16; NLI MS 5006/13.
76 NLI MS 5006/17.
77 Maume to Sylvester O’Shea, 15 June 1798, NLI MS 5006/21.
79 Ibid., f.27. Fulton, Journal, p.52, misreads this passage of Price’s manuscript.
Irishmen, with Roberts in particular being ‘an absolute abettor’. There is no substantiating evidence to support Maume’s claims, although it is likely that magistrates in the position of Roberts and Bruce in the spring felt themselves under threat of attack or assassination and were reluctant to press their opponents too hard, fearing reprisals. Certainly, the authorities in Dublin Castle had been critical of inactive country magistrates for many months.

Arthur’s court-martial was set for Saturday 23 June. According to Maume, Captain Brand warned him of the ‘severest punishments if he did not stand firm’. At the trial, Maume implicated Arthur and even, on the second day, changed his testimony on the date he delivered the letters in order to ruin Arthur’s February alibi. He had, however, managed, before the trial, to threaten the other main witnesses, Edward Sanders and Joseph Anderson, with dire consequences if they confirmed his evidence. Both, on oath, consequently reneged on their pre-trial statements. ‘I positively assert’, wrote Maume in his memoir, ‘that had it not been for my conduct relative to Sanders and Anderson, Mr Arthur would have been hung at his own door according to the premeditation’.

The trial was a disappointment for the prosecution. Apart from some secondhand scuttlebutt, the only evidence produced against Arthur was from Maume and this was not corroborated. Brand and Lieutenant-Colonel Cockill, who had ‘tested’ Maume on his evidence pre-trial, were forced to testify themselves, in a sorry attempt to make use of the original statements of Sanders and Anderson. Not even an adjournment to the following Monday could help the prosecution’s cause. There was, of course, no chance that Arthur would be acquitted, but the verdict was an unsatisfactory ‘guilty in part of the crime’. Thanks to Maume, there was insufficient evidence to convict him of a capital offence. For senior officers such as Morrison, who was a humane man, this may have been sufficient, for his main objective was the reinstatement of order and stability in the county, which was impossible if Arthur were to remain at large.

For the Protestant ultra-loyalists who were the driving force behind the whole episode, however, Maume had a lot to answer for. He was meant to be their pawn, but had checkmated them.

By focusing on Arthur’s case, the authorities had lost their opportunity to uncover the local United Irish organisation as represented by the other suspects.

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80 Maume to Morrison, 19 June 1798, NLI MS 5006/24.
81 McDowell, Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution, p.539.
82 Maume in his memoir misdates it as 24 June.
84 Trial Minutes, Rebellion Papers, 620/17/14. Anderson was pilloried in Limerick for his prevarication. Dublin Evening Post, 30 June 1798; Freeman’s Journal, 3 July 1798.
86 Trial Minutes, Rebellion Papers, 620/17/14.
87 Morrison to Castlereagh, 26 June 1798, ibid. For Morrison’s humanity, see McDowell, Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution, p.588.
mentioned in Maume’s statements. Once he was discredited as a witness, all those under arrest were either released without trial or acquitted. For Maume, the verdict was a pyrrhic victory. True, his friends were never arrested, but his reputation was ruined. He would be forever branded as a stag. As indeed he was, but he was part of an informers’ chain, caught in a dilemma that faced thousands in 1798. Sanders informed on him; Maume informed on others; some of those would no doubt have informed on yet others if they had faced the prospect of punishment. As Captain William Cox of the New South Wales Corps put it to Joseph Holt, following an attempted plot in Port Jackson in 1800, ‘you know one would hang another’. Maume failed the test of character, as did so many in those difficult times. He did not have the insouciance of ‘Captain Justice’, a United Irish captain from Limerick who, on the scaffold, ‘took out his snuff box and contentedly remained hanging some hours’. Nor, one suspects, would Maume have cast off his shoes at the point of execution, to prove to the crowd that he had not ‘chirped’, as some rebels were to do. But to condemn him outright for his perfidy is to ignore the circumstances: an ordinary young man facing the dilemmas of extraordinary times.

Nor were Maume’s troubles over. At some point he was transferred to Dublin, where he was kept in confinement and interrogated repeatedly by Edward Cooke. Looking back on those sessions five years later, Cooke remembered Maume’s testimony to be ‘in general ... improbable and in many instances ... false to my own knowledge’. Arthur, he thought, had been falsely accused and was rightly ‘liberated with every acknowledgement due to his believed innocence’. The official position at the time, however, was not quite so unqualified (and Maume later claimed that Cooke had told him that ‘the unimpeachability of my character was unquestioned’). Both Cornwallis and Castlereagh were anxious to play down the view, common amongst loyalists, that the Rebellion was primarily a sectarian uprising and instead attempted to emphasise its Jacobin character. Arthur’s trial, with its strong whiff of religious intolerance, was an acute embarrassment, not only because the poor trial transcript undermined any attempt by Dublin Castle to respond to Arthur’s subsequent rebuttals of the evidence, but also because Morrison, under pressure from angry loyalists, had made it plain that tranquillity would not return to Limerick if Arthur were

88 Rebellion Papers, 620/3/27/6; Freeman’s Journal, 3 July 1798; Dublin Evening Post, 3 July 1798.
89 Holt, Rum Story, p.64.
90 Maume to Townsend, 6 June 1798, NLI MS 5006/11.
91 For examples of this practice, see Freeman’s Journal, 22 August; 5 September 1799; 22 September 1801.
92 Cooke to Shee, 29 July [1803], PRO HO100/117, f.35.
93 Maume to Castlereagh, 26 May 1806, PRO CO201/41, f.53.
allowed to remain in the town. Thus, even if the Dublin authorities did reject Maume’s testimony in the aftermath of the trial, they still felt obliged to treat Arthur as if some guilt remained attached to his character.

For his part, Arthur waxed indignant at his treatment. Believing that ‘the dark proceedings’ against him had been part of ‘a vindictive plan’ initiated by Morrison, he wanted that ‘abominable villain’ Maume prosecuted for ‘the grocest (sic.) perjury’. He also sought from Cornwallis a ‘complete reversal of the sentence of the Court’. To this, however, the lord lieutenant could not agree, partly because a cloud of suspicion still hung over Arthur, but mainly because emotions continued to be inflamed against him in Limerick. When Arthur briefly returned from Dublin to the town in October, to arrange his affairs before leaving the country, he was held in custody by Brand, despite having a letter from Cooke giving him permission to be there. Only the intervention of General Duff, Morrison’s superior officer, enabled Arthur to avoid further imprisonment. Arthur travelled to England a few weeks later, having agreed to follow Cooke’s advice to keep quiet until the arrival of ‘a favourable moment of returning tranquillity’. He was still there five years later.

IV

In November 1798, John Caldwell, under sentence of banishment but temporarily marooned in Cork,

met with an interesting genteel looking young man, apparently in bad health and of a melancholy, desponding temperament. He made some advances towards me and stated the nature of his bodily complaints. I being somewhat of a quack, ventured to prescribe for him, and he alleged (sic.) my nostrums had done him service and a sort of intimacy followed. That Maume was suffering from depression is perhaps understandable. Pointed out as ‘the notorious Maun (sic.), the informer, tool of Fitzgerald’; forced to listen to toasts such as ‘Damnation to all spies and informers’ (from patriotic naval officers to boot); and still uncertain of his fate, he cut a sorry figure. Interestingly, however, Caldwell picked up a rumour that Maume ‘was the means of saving the life, character and property of the worthy and respectable Mr Arthur of Limerick’. Whether this came from Maume himself remains unclear;

95 Morrison to Castlereagh, 26 June 1798, Rebellion Papers, 620/17/14.
96 Arthur to Castlereagh, 18 August 1798, Arthur to Cooke, 16 September 1798, Rebellion Papers, 620/41/29; Arthur to Cooke, 19 November 1798, Rebellion Papers, 620/40/59.
97 Petition of Francis Arthur, n.d, ibid.
98 Arthur to Cooke, 19 November 1798, ibid; Morrison to Castlereagh, 21 October 1798, Rebellion Papers, 620/40/183.
99 Arthur to Cooke, 19 November 1798.
100 Caldwell, ‘Particulars’, p.122.
101 Ibid., p.123.
Caldwell certainly received news of Maume after he had left Cork, for he reported that Maume’s ‘feelings on quitting his native country forever, regarded by most of his countrymen as a vile renegade, became too powerful for his nearly worn out frame and he dropped dead on the [Cork] wharf’.  

Caldwell’s confused account of Maume—he was both a despised informer and an heroic saviour—reflects the co-existence of two contending narratives of what had happened in Limerick in June 1798. Maume’s narrative, which in the intervening years has been forgotten, was not totally bereft of support at the time. Thomas Harding of Cork, Judkin Fitzgerald and Lieutenant-General Myers, commander-in-chief of the Cork district, sent memorials to Dublin Castle on his behalf. They were ineffectual, for in December Myers was ordered to put Maume on the convict ship *Minerva*, where he was ‘to be considered a man who admitting his criminality has voluntarily submitted to perpetual transportation’.  

If Arthur was unjustly treated, so too was Maume. He had not been tried, either in a civil or a military court. He had volunteered for the army as his penance, but was ordered for transportation. That order had been cancelled and he was formally acquitted of any offence. Now, the transportation order had been resurrected, albeit in a ‘voluntary’ form. In theory, this meant that his punishment was the act of transportation itself; once in the colony of New South Wales, he would be a free man, subject only to his permanent banishment. He would, General Myers had assured him, ‘enjoy all the immunities and privileges of a British subject under certain regulations’.  

In practice, however, having a background as a United Irishman could negate the advantages of voluntary banishment. It was, as Maume later complained, a ‘forlorn sentence’. For some years after the *Minerva*’s arrival in Port Jackson in January 1800, the authorities bemoaned the presence of so many political Irishmen in the colony. Their reputations had preceded them and many, it must be said, remained recalcitrant. Plots, and threats of plots, peppered the colony, with former United Irishmen at their centres. In this atmosphere, the stags predictably raised their antlers once more. On the *Minerva*, Dudley Hartigan, a Tipperary gentleman’s steward carrying a sentence of transportation for life for administering illegal oaths, had frequently given the crew information on various supposed plots amongst the convicts. On one occasion, fourteen of the prisoners’ ‘leaders’, including Maume, were locked up in a strong room in the aft of the

102 Ibid.
103 Maume to Castlereagh, 16 May 1806, PRO CO201/41, f.51.
104 [Littlehales] to Myers, 22 December 1798, PRO HO100/86, f.100. According to the captain’s log, Maume did not embark on the *Minerva* until 17 February 1799. Fulton, *Journal*, p.263.
105 Maume to Castlereagh, 26 May 1806, PRO CO201/41, f.51.
106 Archives Office of New South Wales [AONSW], NSW Colonial Secretary’s Papers, 4/1846, Petitions for Mitigation of Sentence 1810, ii, p.152.
107 Costello, *Botany Bay*, p.11.
ship, under threat of hanging if Hartigan were attacked for his informing. Thus, despite his career as an informer in Limerick, Maume was still classified as a potentially dangerous political prisoner.

The Minerva was notorious for having carried a large percentage of political prisoners to Port Jackson. It might also have gained a reputation for depositing a surprising number of informers. Within months of its arrival, many of its convicts were involved in a series of plots which were, however, uncovered, mainly because so many of its human cargo were prepared to offer information to the authorities. No fewer than eight Minerva convicts gave depositions to two enquiries in September and October 1800, after which seven men – three from the Minerva – were sentenced to 100 lashes. One of these was a William Maugham. If this refers to Maume, rather than to William Maher/Meagher, a Clonmel sawyer who had been transported on the Minerva for sheep stealing, it seems unlikely that the punishment was carried out, as he later praised ‘the lenient administration of Governor Hunter’.11

The suspected Irishmen, but not, apparently, Maume, were re-transported to the penal colony of Norfolk Island, where another conspiracy was devised, to begin on Christmas Day. It foundered, owing to information given by another Minerva convict, Henry Grady. The two accredited leaders – again, Minerva veterans – were hanged without trial. Perhaps mercifully, only three of the many informers during the Castle Hill uprising of March 1804 were men from the Minerva, one of whom, Daniel McAlice (McCallas), had been the proposed assassin of Hartigan on the voyage to Botany Bay. It is perhaps understandable that Joseph Holt, himself the perennial victim of self-preserving stags (‘one striving to hang another’), believed that ‘there was as much false swearers in New South Wales as was in Ireland, according to number more’. That he joined their number himself, both before he left Ireland and after the Castle Hill uprising, is slightly more perplexing, until it is appreciated that informing had become institutionalised and embedded within the culture of revolt. Turning the spit was despised, not just because it undermined solidarity and destroyed trust, but because it had become endemic.

108 Assize Data 1798, Commons Journals of the House of Commons of Ireland, xviii (1799); Price, ‘Minerva Journal’, f.42.
109 My own calculations, yet to be published, suggest that slightly more than fifty per cent of the male convicts disembarked from the Minerva can be classified as ‘rebels’.
111 Assize Data 1798, Commons Journals of the House of Commons of Ireland, xviii (1799); Maume to Castlereagh, 26 May 1806. Hunter’s term of office ended in October 1800.
112 Whitaker, Unfinished Revolution, pp.56-8.
114 Holt, Run Story, pp.81, 79.
115 Holt’s Information, March 1799, PRO HO100/86, f.390; Whitaker, Unfinished Revolution, p.105.
WILLIAM MAUME: UNITED IRISHMAN AND INFORMER IN TWO HEMISPHERES

Maume’s role in these plots appears to have been slight, if he was involved at all. Nevertheless, by teaming up with Sir Henry Browne Hayes, the Cork kidnapper of a Quaker heiress, who had arrived on the *Atlas I* in 1802, and by becoming involved in a long-running guerrilla campaign against Governor King’s supposed corruption, he found himself tarred with the same brush as ‘those incendiaries who have ... been employed in promoting discord and fermenting litigations’. Maume’s ‘principles and conduct’, wrote King, ‘have changed as little as the others, nor can time or place have any effect on such depraved characters’. Maume was sent into exile on several occasions: to the coalfields of Newcastle, Norfolk Island and Van Dieman’s Land. His stint in Newcastle resulted from government suspicions of his involvement in the Castle Hill Rebellion. Newly married and hoping for a swift return to Sydney, he reverted once more to the role of informer by writing a declaration, which he refused to sign ‘for fear of being discovered’, but which was sent to Governor King. In it, he confessed to having helped two French officers from the *Naturaliste* during the period of peace in 1802, who had made it clear that they were gathering military and security intelligence on the colony, to be used when war recommenced. Maume claimed to have given only general information, written in Latin. He also stated that he had virtually refused their offer of help to escape. Maume linked this episode to the machinations of Maurice Margarot, one of the ‘Scottish martyrs’, who was at the centre of most intrigue in Sydney. At the same time, he implicated two *Minerva* shipmates, Joseph Holt and William Henry Alcock.

The effects were meagre. Margarot’s house was searched for incriminating documents, suspicions of Holt were further raised and Maume was eventually allowed back to Sydney in March 1805. A year later he was at the penal colony of Norfolk Island, still making ‘discoveries’, on this occasion to Lord Castlereagh in London about the corruption of Governor King. There is no evidence that he received a reply. It is clear that Maume had little hope of settling down in Australia while he remained under Hayes’ malign influence and King continued as governor. He had ‘no wish to return to Europe’ and was ‘determined to spend the remainder of [his] days’ in the colony. In 1809, in the aftermath of the Rum Rebellion, Maume was given a conditional pardon by Acting Governor Paterson, which was confirmed by the new governor, Macquarie, only in 1813. He had claimed that throughout his time in New South Wales his conduct had ‘always been marked with devotion, propriety and industry’.  

116 Quoted in *ADB*, ii, pp.216-7. For Hayes, see Lord Kilwarden to Earl of Hardwicke, PRO HO 100/104, ff.115-6; *Freeman’s Journal*, 10 February 1801; *ADB*, i, pp.526-7.


118 Maume to Castlereagh, 26 May 1806.

119 AONSW, NSW Colonial Secretary’s Papers, Petitions 1811-12, 4/1848, iii, pp.226-31.

120 AONSW, NSW Colonial Secretary’s Papers, 4/1846, ii, p.152.
settled on a thirty-acre land grant in Tasmania with his wife and children, where he became a landowner and keen horse racer. He died in 1850, his role as an informer in two hemispheres long forgotten.

Creating a narrative out of a series of sworn statements and confessions by an acknowledged informer might appear, on the surface, to be a dubious enterprise. How credible can they be, when they are produced under one form of duress or another? Thousands of informations and petitions exist from the period of the 1798 Rebellion in Ireland. What they show, and what Maume’s case exemplifies, is that no one person caught up in the Rebellion can be said to be a typical ‘victim’ of those months. All, ultimately, had their own motives for acting as they did and all had their own stories to tell and their own explanations to offer. Each accusation against a fellow rebel, each humble plea for forgiveness and each angry claim of victimisation in the petitions and statements of the day is capable of illuminating a part of the rebellion experience. In the end, however, as Congreve noted, ‘We never are, but by ourselves, betrayed’.121

121 William Congreve, The Old Bachelor (1693), Act III, scene I.