

MI5 spies help student unlock terrorists' web

John Walshe
Education Editor

A YOUNG Irish student is completing a ground-breaking PhD at Cambridge University under the supervision of British security service MI5's official historian.

Johnny Ryan (27) will do his doctorate on how terrorists use the internet under the supervision of Prof Christopher Andrew, the official historian of Britain's domestic spy agency.

He already made an impact with his first book, 'Countering Militant Islamist Radicalisation on the Internet', which was launched last year by the former chair of the UK Joint Intelligence Committee, Dame Pauline Neville-Jones.

The book argued against the European Commission's suggestion of using internet censorship to combat terror, and was heavily cited in the Commission's official impact report that decided to abandon the idea of an EU-wide internet censorship system.

Graduates

The Ballsbridge student is one of three Irish graduates to become O'Reilly Scholars this year. Normally, two graduates get the awards, which are worth €25,400 per annum for up to two years.

However, the standard was so high and the choices so difficult this year that the O'Reilly Foundation decided to make three awards.

The other recipients are Car-



Johnny Ryan with fellow O'Reilly Scholarship students Caroline Martin from Tallaght (centre) and Rhona Gaynor from Dunboyne, Co Meath. STEVE HUMPHREYS

oline Martin from NUI Galway, who plans to study for her PhD in marine geology, and UCD graduate Rhona Gaynor, who plans to complete her MP A degree in Public Policy and Management at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

All three say the award will make a huge difference to their lives and to their finances.

"It has liberated me to pursue PhD research full time, without having to also work nine to five," said Johnny Ryan.

He wants to understand how terrorists "are adapting to the internet, and how some young Europeans are attracted by the idea of committing terrorist attacks in their own countries".

The award could not have come at a better time for another Dubliner, Caroline Martin, from Tallaght, a former student at Firhouse Community School.

After her Leaving Cert at age 17, she worked for six years before being convinced by her friends to enroll in Galway, where she studied air and ocean

science. A deep-sea diver, she inherited the love of the sea from her father, Eamon, who was in the old merchant navy.

The award will help her pursue her dream of a doctorate, jointly at Galway and the renowned Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute in the US.

Substantial

The award will also make a difference to Rhona Gaynor, who has to pay substantial fees for her studies in London. Aged

22, she already has a masters in public administration and hopes to work in public administration in Ireland. She has already worked in Washington with the EU Ambassador to the United States, former Taoiseach John Bruton, and spent a summer break from college working with disadvantaged people in Calcutta.

The O'Reilly Foundation was set up as a charitable foundation by Sir Anthony O'Reilly in 1998. The Board of Trustees is chaired by Lady Chrissy O'Reil-

ly and the other members are Susan Wildman, Cameron O'Reilly, Justine O'Reilly, Gavin O'Reilly, Caroline Dempsey and Tony O'Reilly Jnr.

The Foundation sponsors a programme of scholarships for young Irish scholars to undertake post-graduate education in their chosen field and in an institution or university of their choice worldwide.

To date, 24 students have been supported in their academic endeavours.