

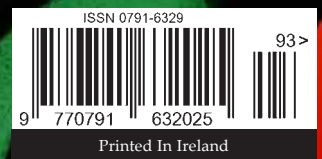
# Irish Roots

*Celebrating Irish Ancestry*

## Locating Living Descendants

*The First Of A Three Part  
Series On How To Find  
Living Descendants  
Of Your Ancestors*

**Trace Your  
Co. Kildare  
Ancestors** *In this issue!*



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# Irish Roots

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## A few words from the editor

Welcome to our spring edition. As usual, St. Patrick's Day evokes memories and sentiments of Irish customs, culture and traditions for the Irish diaspora worldwide. Indeed, one old Irish tradition was the oral tracing of family histories. At ancient feasts and banquets, it was customary for poets to recite the genealogies and praises of the host.



I remember in my childhood listening to the local people spending hours 'tracing relations' of their families and neighbours in the oral tradition. The advent of the arrival of television in every home in Ireland eventually brought this type of storytelling to an end. As the interest in genealogy has grown at an astounding rate in recent times, perhaps the 'tracing relations' tradition is starting to make somewhat of a reappearance, ironically thanks to television's many genealogical themed programmes.

In this issue of Irish Roots, Nicola Morris commences a three part series on 'Locating Living Descendants' on pages six and seven. St. Patrick himself features on page twelve. Sean Murphy concludes his 'Surnames of The Four Provinces' series with a look at Ulster names on pages 16 and 17. Claire Santry brings more chat with the latest developments, releases and news roundup in the ever changing world of Irish genealogy on page 18. Maggie Loughran sheds more light on 'How To Research Your Irish Ancestors' on page twenty, and Kathleen Chater shares the history of the Huguenots in Ireland on pages 24 and 25. Now if all that doesn't deserve a cup of tea and a chat I don't know what does. Happy 'tracing relations' this St. Patrick's Day and always.

Beannachtaí na Féile Pádraig oraibh go léir!

*Maureen*



Stained Glass image of St. Patrick Shutterstock.com

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# NEWS

## National Library Of Ireland Announces Its Most Significant Ever Digitisation Project for Irish Genealogy

The National Library of Ireland unveiled details of its most ambitious digitisation project to date in December last. The project will see the Library's entire collection of Catholic parish register microfilms made available online – for free – by summer 2015.

The records are considered the single most important source of information on Irish family history prior to the 1901 Census. Dating from the 1740s to the 1880s, they cover 1,091 parishes throughout Ireland, and consist primarily of baptismal and marriage records.

Colette O'Flaherty, Head of Special Collections at the NLI, said: "Anyone tracing Irish family history will be able to access this site – from anywhere in the world – and search for the parish in which they are interested. They will be able to see a list of registers for that parish, and will be able to click on whichever registers they like to browse through the images contained within.

"The information in the registers varies from parish to parish but, typically, includes the dates of the baptisms or marriages, and the names of the key people involved, including godparents or witnesses. Obviously, such information is extremely valuable for both amateur genealogists and professional researchers.

"The microfilms have been available to visitors to the NLI since the 1970s. However, this project means that, for the first time, anyone who likes will be able to access these registers without having to travel to Dublin."

The 390,000 digital images due to be published by the NLI will be searchable by parish location only. They will not be transcribed or indexed by the NLI, and the images will be of the microfilms of the original registers, which – in some cases – were in poor condition when the microfilming took place. The images will be in black and white.

Ms. O'Flaherty said the registers are a wonderful legacy of the Catholic Church to Ireland. "The role of the Catholic Church in creating and maintaining these records during some of the most turbulent times in Irish history must be acknowledged and praised," she said.

Further details of this digitisation project will be announced by the NLI in the coming months.

## Clare Museum Acquires 1916 Journal

A journal and autograph book that provides a unique insight into life and conditions at Frongoch prisoner of war camp, where an estimated 1,800 Irish participants of The Easter Rising were interned between June and December 1916, has been acquired at auction by Clare Museum.

Belonging to IRA Volunteer and future Clare T.D. Patrick Brennan, from Meelick, the album features accounts of life in the North Wales camp, poetry in Irish and English, and coloured illustrations of the camp and its inhabitants.

The journal is also autographed by many of the camp's prisoners including Michael Collins and Richard Mulcahy, who would later become instrumental figures in the ensuing Irish War of Independence and the establishment of the Irish Free State.

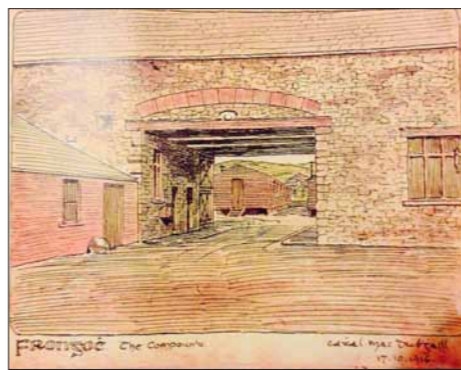
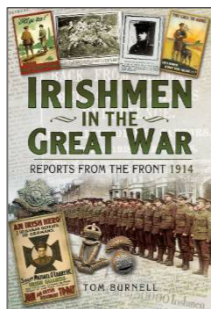
"Outside of the author's historic connections with County Clare, this journal and autograph book is hugely important considering the upcoming centenary of the 1916 Rising and the significant influence of the Frongoch camp experience on the future leaders of the Irish War of Independence," commented Cllr. John Crowe, Cathaoirleach of Clare County Council.

It is hoped the document will be digitised in the future so as to allow people to view its contents online at [clarelibrary.ie](http://clarelibrary.ie).

## Irishmen In The Great War: Reports From The Front 1914

Irishmen In The Great War: Reports From The Front 1914 by Tom Burnell, published by Pen & Sword Books features twenty-seven Irish newspapers for the period covering the Great War.

Included in the book are accounts of local men at the front; of torpedoed ships; drunken wives; final letters and requests from the trenches. Also eye-witness accounts of the slaughter as it was happening; battle reports from officers serving in Irish regiments; quirky snippets; chaplains' sympathetic letters; POW reports of conditions and war poetry, as well as the tales of the Leinster's, Munster's, Connaught's and Dublin Fusiliers serving in the Ulster Division, 10th and 16th Irish Divisions. Reports of medical breakthroughs, paranormal occurrences and miraculous escapes from death also feature. See [www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk) for further details.

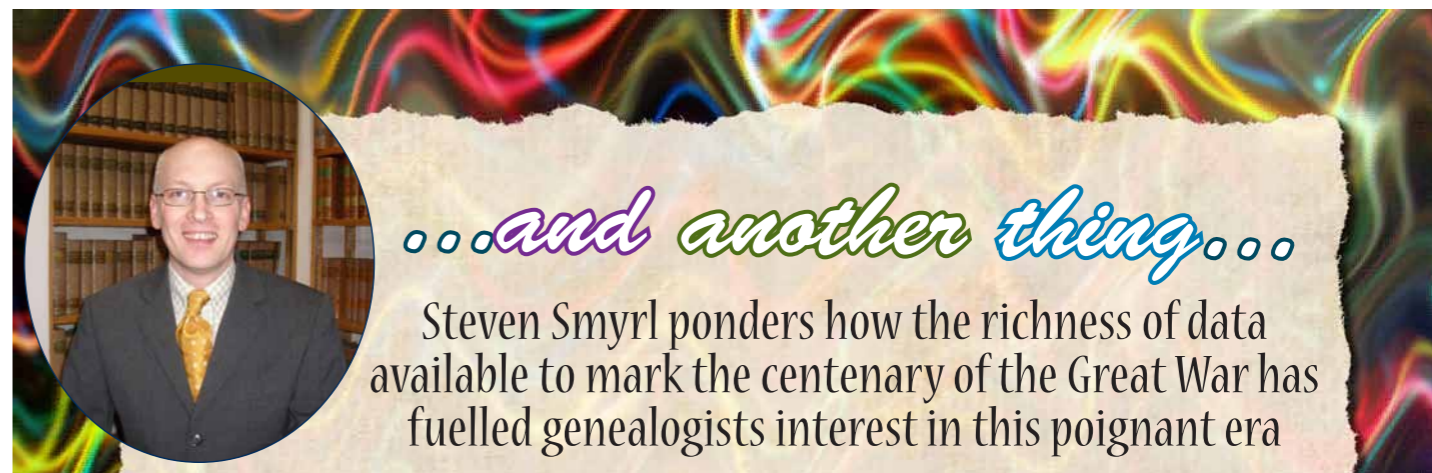


## Tracing Your Irish Ancestors Conference 6-12 September 2015

The Ulster Historical Foundation will hold a family history conference on 6 - 12 September next. The extensive programme will include trips to the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, the National Archives in Dublin, the Registry of Deeds and the RCB Library.

The programme of tours throughout the week will also include a visit through rolling to sites of international renown from the Giant's Causeway and Dunluce Castle on County Antrim's wild Atlantic coast to the archaeological wonder which is Newgrange in the tranquil Boyne Valley, to the haunting Kilmainham Gaol and Trinity College Dublin with its Old Library and the Book of Kells Exhibition – a 'must see' for any visitor to Dublin.

Assisted personal research, talks, tours and sightseeing are all part of the eclectic, friendly and fun mix of the Tracing Your Irish Ancestors Programme. For further information email: [enquiry@uhf.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@uhf.org.uk) or visit [www.ancestryireland.com/family-history-conference](http://www.ancestryireland.com/family-history-conference)



...and another thing...

Steven Smyrl ponders how the richness of data available to mark the centenary of the Great War has fuelled genealogists interest in this poignant era

As you undoubtedly know, last year marked the centenary of the opening salvo of the Great War. The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand proved to be the catalyst that Kaiser Wilhelm would use to plunge Europe and subsequently the world into pointless, destructive chaos. Millions lost their lives and millions more were injured, maimed or suffered devastating shellshock.

The Registrar General in London noted the official figure of registered war deaths of Irishmen in the British Army as 27,405, but this figure falls well short of the number recorded in the eight-volume set entitled *Ireland's Memorial Records 1914-1918*, published in 1923. This source noted the names and personal details of 49,647 Irishmen who perished during the conflict. However, in recent years even this figure has become disputed, considered to possibly omit as many as 15,000 names of Irish from both British and Empire forces.

The Great War straddles the middle period of what has become known as the Decade of Centenaries, 1912-1922: sinking of the Titanic; the Dublin Lockout; the Home Rule Bill; Protestant Unionist resistance to the threat of "Rome Rule" by forming the Ulster Volunteers; the Catholic Nationalists' response in forming the Irish Volunteers; The Rising; War of Independence; Partition, Anglo-Irish Treaty, and ultimately, the Civil War.

At the outset, the constitutional Nationalists supported Irishmen signing up for war service, but by the time of the creation of the 26-county Free State in 1922, the part Irishmen played in the war from south of the new border was already being denied and erased from public consciousness. Thus began decades of self-imposed amnesia; the collective forgetting of the names and identities of thousands of men who served and died in an Imperial conflict.

The period 1912-1922 amplified the longstanding polarisation of the two religious communities in Ireland, Protestant and Catholic, ultimately leading to partition and a long era of deep suspicion of the "other side". It really is no surprise in this context that the Great War was so easily whitewashed south of the border. However, the last 20 years' seismic shift in the cultural and political relations between Britain and Ireland and the centenary of the start of the Great War has finally allowed Catholic Ireland an opportunity to review the part played by its grandfathers, uncles and great grandfathers in the "war to end all wars".

The imminence of the centenary itself has fuelled wide ranging interest in this period of Ireland's history, and not least that of genealogists. In the last few years much material has been made available online giving often detailed insight into the personal lives and war service of young – and not so young – men and women a century ago. The websites of the UK

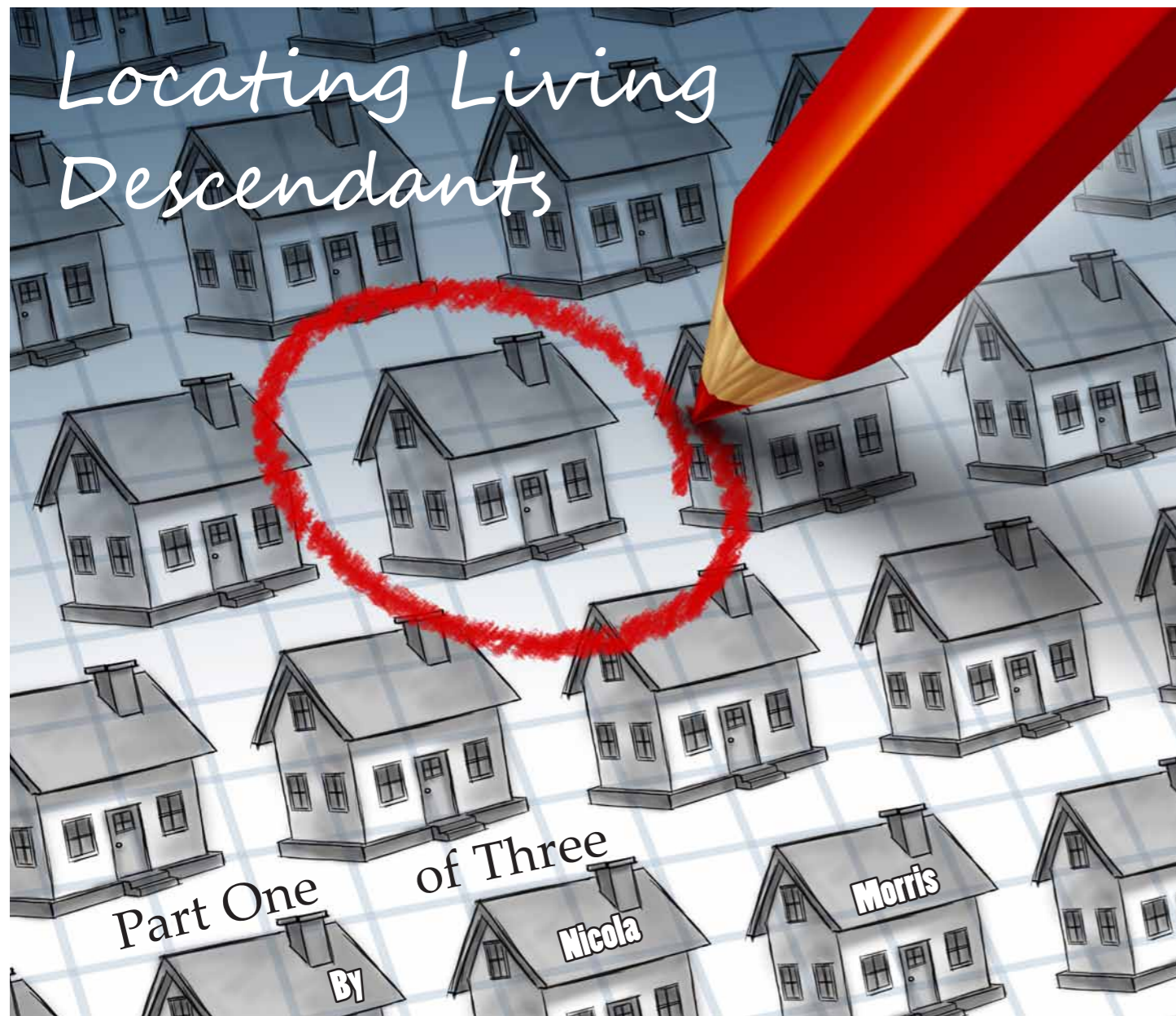
National Archives (TNA), Ancestry and Findmypast and others have added searchable and/or browsable collections dealing with war service, injury, death, medals, internment, prisoners, war diaries, nursing, navy, air force, pay and, most recent of all, personal effects of the dead.

Out of interest for this article I looked at a scanned TNA War Office record which allowed me to piece together some of the war service of my relative, Margaret Emily Smyrl, born in 1892 in Co. Tyrone, a qualified nurse. Her War Office record noted that she served in England in Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service from March 1918 until April 1921. Previously she had worked at the Belfast City Infirmary from November 1913. She held the rank of Sister from January 1921. The same file notes her additional service in the Second World War.

On Ancestry, I was lucky enough to find the damaged army file of my great grandfather, Robert Smyrl. It recorded that he signed up in Belfast to serve as a reservist with Royal Irish Rifles in 1911 when he was just short of 18 years of age. He was only 5' 2" high and weighed just 10st! He had grey eyes and brown/black hair and was described as a "small, well set up lad". He was noted as Methodist, rather than Presbyterian, but therein lies another story too long to tell here! In July 1912 he transferred to the regular army, fulltime. He was stationed in India from December 1913 until October 1914, whereupon he was transferred to the British Expeditionary Force in France. He was in England on leave in January 1915 when he went "missing", eventually being noted as "deserted". However, what the Army bigwigs didn't know was that he had taken a notion and joined the navy for the rest of the war. I'm left wondering what trouble he brought upon himself through this action.

These two examples of information relating to my own forbears show the richness of the data that can now be accessed online by genealogists in search of those who served in the Great War. In Ireland, until recent times, often the only record of these men was their names inscribed on war memorials predominantly found in Protestant churches up and down the country. In the church I attend each week, on Remembrance Sunday last November we remembered the 18 men who perished on land and sea from our congregation by reading out their names and ages. A little bit of history rehabilitated.

*Steven Smyrl is President of the Association of Professional Genealogists in Ireland, Chairman of the Irish Genealogical Research Society and Executive Liaison Officer for the Council of Irish Genealogical Organisations. He is a director of the Irish probate research firm Massey & King.*



**I have met many people researching their family history who want to find out what happened to the siblings of their ancestors and locate long lost cousins who are alive today. In some cases joining up with other branches of your family tree and sharing information can shed new light on your own research. A collection of letters held by your fifth cousin in New Zealand may hold the key to a mystery that has impeded your research in Ireland.**

Forward tracing can be a lot more difficult than researching earlier generations. We cannot always anticipate where a person might have gone, when they married or died, whereas census returns and vital records often tell us when a person married or where they came from, making it easier to work backwards. Of course there are plenty of websites that will connect people researching the same family, but in the absence of one of these connections, you will have to do the legwork yourself.

There are two research avenues that you can use to try and find out what happened to the siblings of your ancestors and their descendants. You will most likely have

to employ both methods, particularly if you want comprehensive results.

The first method requires painstaking and methodical research and is usually what is employed in probate cases. You must first identify all of the siblings of your ancestor, their full names and dates and places of birth. This information will be used to confirm whether you have found the correct individuals as your search progresses. Civil birth registrations, baptismal records and census returns should help you to identify the relevant persons.

Due to the high rate of infant mortality in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Ireland there is a strong possibility that some

of the siblings of your ancestor died in infancy. There is no point searching for the marriage or emigration of someone who died in childhood, so it would be sensible to first determine which of your ancestor's siblings lived to adulthood.

If the child was born after 1864 a search can be made of the civil death register for the first 18 or 21 years of their life. The civil death index recorded the age of the deceased which should correspond with their approximate year of birth, as should the registration district, unless the family had moved. The death certificate should record the address of the child and the name of the informant, often a parent, which will help to confirm the correct record. Unfortunately, not

all deaths were registered and there is a possibility that you will fail to find death registrations for some of the siblings of your ancestor, even if they died in infancy.

Once the subjects of your search reached the age of 16 they either emigrated, married or died unmarried in Ireland. You need to methodically check for evidence of these events in each of your surviving siblings' lives.

It is sensible to start with a search for their marriage in Ireland. If they married they likely had issue and a new generation for you to pursue. Although the legal age of marriage was 21, a marriage could have taken place with a child as young as 16, so start your search when the child was at least 16 years of age. Although men may have married into their 60s or 70s, you can probably confine your search to a 30 year period and don't just assume that women only married in their 20s. As marriages usually took place in the parish of the bride, female marriages are most likely to have been registered locally, but of course this was not always the case. If you are unsuccessful in your local registration district, you may have to extend your search nationwide. The Irish civil marriage index for 1864-1858 can be found online for free at [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org). The later indexes are available in the General Register Office research room in Dublin.

If you locate a marriage record for one or more of your ancestor's siblings, you can search for the children of that marriage, bringing you a generation closer to the present day. From 1903 the Irish civil birth index recorded the mother's maiden name. If you are searching for a female relative with the surname Brady and you discover that she married a man named Clarke in 1906, the civil birth index should identify all Clarke children with a mother's maiden name of Brady. Unfortunately, this function is not included in any online indexes until the late 1930s. For the earlier period you will have to check the index books at the General Register Office in Dublin. You may also find that there were two couples with the same surnames having children at the same time. Only copies of the registrations will confirm the correct birth records.

If you fail to find a marriage record in Ireland, it is possible that the marriage was not registered or that your subject died unmarried. Although tedious, a search should be made for the death of each unaccounted for relative during their adult life, bearing in mind that they could have lived to 100 years or possibly more. While they may have died in your

local registration district, it is also possible that they died elsewhere in the Republic of Ireland or even, after 1922, in Northern Ireland. There are separate records for civil registration for Northern Ireland after 1922 at <https://geni.nidirect.gov.uk/>.

The address recorded on a child's birth certificate or the date of death of an unmarried relative may prove vital as your search progresses, so it is worth pursuing these items.

There are two reasons why you may not find evidence that your relative married or died in Ireland. Either these events were not registered with the civil authorities or your relative emigrated.

There are numerous possibilities that must be considered when it comes to emigration. The first of these is destination. Traditionally Irish emigrants settled in England, Wales, Scotland, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and India. You will need to methodically go through the records of each of these countries for evidence of your family. This is not an easy task and requires familiarity with the type of records that are available for each country.

You will need to tackle passenger lists, vital records and census returns for each location. Many of these records are now available online, but before you sign

up to any website, find out whether the collections are comprehensive. Birth and marriage records for Massachusetts, Illinois, Quebec and New South Wales may be available online, but what about the other states in those countries. The passenger records for Ellis Island are online, but what about the other ports where your relative might have arrived. If the collections are not complete, you cannot always be sure that you have found the correct person, they could have settled in a state for which the records are not available.

It is sensible to start your search using the source that has the most coverage for the entire country you are looking at, usually, but not always, census returns. This way you have a much better chance of identifying all possible candidates for your emigrant relatives.

In the next issue I will tackle another, complementary method that can be used to find out what happened to the siblings of your ancestor and take a closer look at records available outside of Ireland.

*Nicola Morris M.A.P.G.I. is a director of Timeline Research ([www.timeline.ie](http://www.timeline.ie)). She has appeared on numerous episodes of Who Do You Think You Are? in both the UK and US and was one of the presenters on the first series of RTE's Genealogy Roadshow.*

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