

# Irish Roots



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**In This Issue:- How To Trace Your DUBLIN ancestors.  
How To Locate Living Descendants Of Your Ancestors Series Part Two.  
What You Need To Know When Sharing Your Family History Online.  
Discovering Records Of Ireland's Churches And Graveyards.  
News From The World Of Irish Genealogy And Lots Lots More!**

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## Irish Roots

Issue No 2 2015 ISSN 0791-6329

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## A few words from the editor



Welcome to our summer edition for 2015. Summer is a delightful time with the prospect of sunny weather, holidays on the horizon and long balmy evenings mark this glorious season. This summer brings great delights for genealogists and family researchers as the National Library of Ireland get set to launch the Catholic parish register microfilms online on July 8th. These images are of baptism and marriage records and the cut-off point for these records is in the 1880s. They are not indexed, so you need to have an idea of the parish your ancestor came from to complete your search. Brian Mitchell's article 'Churches and Graveyards on page 8 proffers further insight into church registers.

If your ancestors have a Dublin connection, join James Ryan and Brian Smith on page 10 on 'Tracing Your Co. Dublin ancestors. Travelling from Dublin to the US and the 19th century where Judith Eccles Wight uses occupational sources to trace ancestors who worked in the police force, page 22. Heading on to Australia Jennifer Harrison remembers the Irish, who worked on the first public steam railway opened in Queensland, Australia, 150 years ago, page 26. Back home we have our regular features with Steven Smyrl, page 5 and Nicola Morris answers your genealogical queries on page 28. Sean J. Murphy outlines the problems associated with sharing your genealogical research online, page 16.

Finally, the recent report of the Joint Committee on Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht on maximising our cultural and genealogical heritage with 37 recommendations makes for encouraging reading including; "We should aim to become the European centre for genealogical industry. This could create employment but for that to happen we must invest in our own cultural institutions", We await the implementation of these recommendations in the future (for further information on these recommendations see [www.oireachtas.ie/Committee-Report-On-Genealogy.PDF](http://www.oireachtas.ie/Committee-Report-On-Genealogy.PDF)) Ah yes, it seems like it is going to be a wonderful summer indeed.

*Maureen*



Trace Your Dublin Ancestors, pages 10 & 11  
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**Printed by**  
Boylan Print Group, Co. Louth, Ireland.  
**International Distribution-**  
Pineapple Media Ltd, Hampshire, UK.

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### Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme Announced

The Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Heather Humphreys TD and Minister of State Aodhán Ó Riordáin TD were joined by An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD and An Tánaiste, Joan Burton TD, at an event in the National Museum of Ireland in Collins Barracks on March 31st last to launch the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme, the national and international initiative to mark the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising.

The year-long programme of activity to commemorate the events of the 1916 Rising aim to reflect on our achievements over the last 100 years and to look towards Ireland's future. The programme includes seven strands; State Ceremonial; Historical Reflection; An Teanga Bheo/The Living Language; Youth and Imagination; Cultural Expression; Community Participation; Global and Diaspora.

The Global and Diaspora strand will endeavour to invite the global Irish family from all over the world to join us in remembering, reflecting and re-imagining. Diplomatic missions are working with Culture Ireland to develop significant events in the US, the UK, Australia, Argentina, France and many other countries. A three week Irish culture festival will be held in Washington; the Irish Embassy in London will stage a flagship event in one of London's main cultural venues and a series of academic conferences examining the impact of the Rising are planned in Australia.

Details of the programme include:-

- A major exhibition of 1916 archival material at the National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks
- The National Flag and a copy of the Proclamation will be delivered to every school in the country
- A series of State commemorative events, including a parade from Dublin Castle to Parnell Square on Easter Sunday 2016 and a special State Reception for relatives
- 7 new public projects at the GPO, Kilmainham Gaol, Pearse's Cottage, the Military Archives and other sites
- A multi-location public event, to be broadcast on Easter Monday 2016
- Cultural events around the globe, to be co-ordinated through Irish embassies and Culture Ireland.

Full details of Ireland 2016, including the Global and Diaspora programme, are available at [www.ireland.ie](http://www.ireland.ie)

### National Library of Ireland Announces Launch Date For New Online Genealogy Resource

The entire collection of Catholic parish register microfilms held by the National Library of Ireland (NLI) will be made available online – for free – from 8th July 2015 onwards. On that date, a dedicated website will go live, with over 390,000 digital images of the microfilm reels on which the parish registers are recorded.

The NLI has been working to digitise the microfilms for over three years under its most ambitious digitisation programme to date.

The parish register 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 the island of Ireland, and consist primarily of baptismal and marriage records.

The NLI's Ciara Kerrigan, who is managing the digitisation of the parish registers, said: "We announced initial details of this project last December, and received a hugely enthusiastic response from people worldwide with an interest in Irish family history. We are delighted to announce that the project has been progressing well, and we will be able to publish all the digitised records online from 8th July onwards.

### Irish Genealogical Research Society Launch Enhancement To Its 'Irish Genealogist Database'

The Irish Genealogical Research Society recently launched an exciting enhancement to its 'Irish Genealogist Database'.

The Irish Genealogist has been published annually since 1937 and comprises thousands of articles relating to Irish genealogy, noting details on family histories, pedigrees, leases, memorial inscriptions, deeds, newspaper extracts and transcripts of parish registers, voters lists, census substitutes, wills, letters, family bibles, rentals and militia & army rolls etc.

A free online Names Index to The Irish Genealogist, comprising in excess of a quarter of a million names, has been available on the Society's website since autumn 2013. Now, following an intensive project to scan images of the journal's articles, the database will link researchers directly to articles that match their search criteria. Initially, the Society is launching images of volume 10 of The Irish Genealogist (covering the years 1998-2001) and these will be followed with regular releases right up to volume 13 (up to 2013).

"This is the most significant ever genealogy project in the history of the NLI. The microfilms have been available to visitors to the NLI since the 1970s. However, their digitisation means that, for the first time, anyone who likes will be able to access these registers without having to travel to Dublin."

Typically, the parish registers include information such as the dates of baptisms and marriages, and the names of the key people involved, including godparents or witnesses. The digital images of the registers will be searchable by parish location only, and will not be transcribed or indexed by the NLI.

"The images will be in black and white, and will be of the microfilms of the original registers," explained Ms. Kerrigan. "There will not be transcripts or indexes for the images. However, the nationwide network of local family history centres holds indexes and transcripts of parish registers for their local areas. So those who access our new online resource will be able to cross-reference the information they uncover, and identify wider links and connections to their ancestral community by also liaising with the relevant local family history centre."

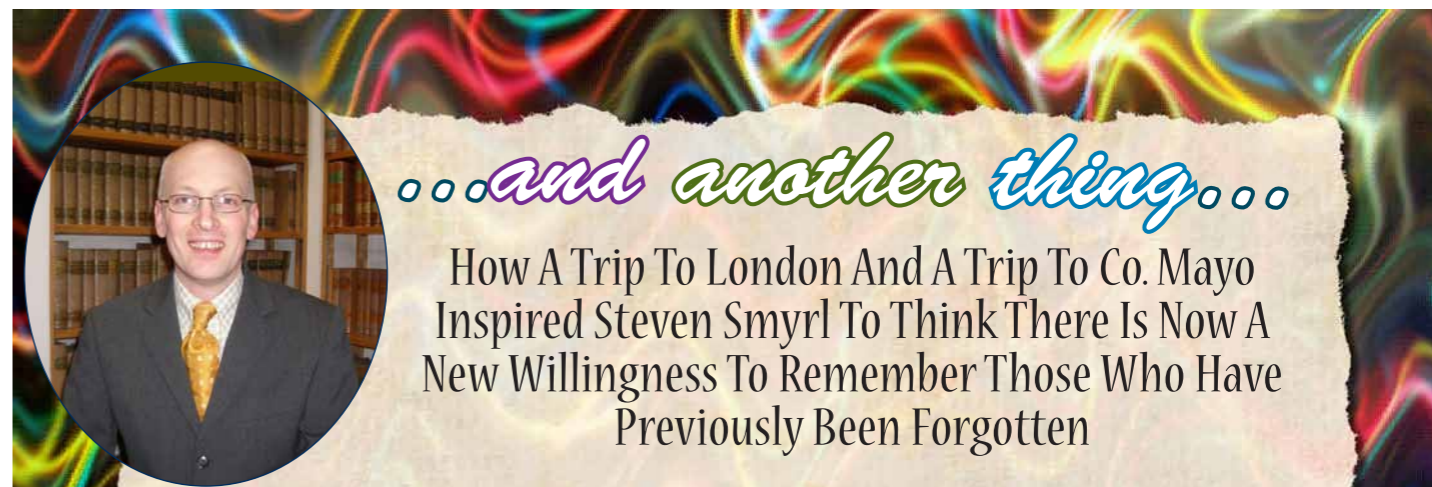
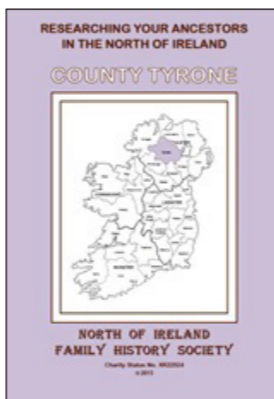
The NLI is planning an official launch event for the new online resource on 8th July. Further details will be available in the coming weeks.

Announcing details of the enhanced database, IGRS Chairman Steven Smyrl said: "The Society's annual journal has been to the forefront of Irish genealogy for almost 80 years. With the launch of this new database, those pursuing their Irish ancestors, no matter where they live, will now be able to access the treasure of data locked away in its pages."

See [www.irishancestors.ie](http://www.irishancestors.ie) to access the database.

### Tracing Your Tyrone Ancestors Now Available From NIFHS

Researching Your Ancestors in the North of Ireland: Co. Tyrone is now available from the North of Ireland Family History Society. This 54 page A5 book has been compiled to assist those researching their families in County Tyrone. The book retails for £7.50. See [www.nifhs.org](http://www.nifhs.org) for further information or to order.



It happened to be in London during the second weekend in May. I was attending the Annual General Meeting of the Irish Genealogical Research Society. Readers may know that I am the chairman of the IGRS and I'm particularly excited that the Society is now entering its 80<sup>th</sup> year! On the Sunday, the day after the AGM, I was free until my plane home that evening, so I wandered down towards Westminster Abbey and watched the tail-end of the VE Day parade. Amongst the various flags being held by the crowd I noticed a few Irish tricolours. I suppose this shouldn't have surprised me, but somehow it did. Maybe, I thought, remembrance is something much easier done well after the fact, for a variety of reasons.

A week before I was in London I was in Ballina, Co. Mayo for the weekend. It was a bit of a washout weather-wise, but we did manage to see Laherdane, the "Titanic Village", without getting rained on. When the Titanic sank in April 1912, eleven of the fourteen passengers from Laherdane drowned. Given the inter-relationships of small Irish communities, there was hardly a family in the Laherdane area which remained untouched by the tragedy. While the loss was never forgotten in Laherdane, 100 years passed before there was any real public display of commemoration. There now stands a very public memorial to those lost in the icy waters of the Atlantic all those years ago. And rather than a more traditional monument, it takes the form of a tumbled down, abandoned cottage, a reminder that for so much of the last 150 years Ireland has suffered the loss of her people through migration.

Returning to the VE Day parade, even 20 years ago one would never have expected to see displays of the Irish flag in the crowd at such an event. Thankfully, in the past two decades Ireland has changed, and much for the better. We can now remember without guilt the service and sacrifice made by so many Irish men in the last war. This wasn't always the case. In the immediate years after the war the State's official line was not just to forget their contribution, but to actively penalise those men. A list (of which I have a copy and am happy to do requested lookups) was compiled of about 5,000 men, noting their names, dates of birth, occupation and last known address and was circulated to all points in the civil and public service so as to deny these men work. What a scandal! The result was that many left the country and returned to England or made a new life in the US.

Between the showers in Mayo we also saw another example of a new willingness to remember. In the pretty little village of Foxford, just south of Ballina, we found a display in the window of the library recalling the service of John Ormsby in the Great War. His gallantry in that conflict earned him the Victoria Cross. Dodging heavy bombardment by machinegun

*'Thankfully, in the past two decades Ireland has changed, and much for the better. We can now remember without guilt the service and sacrifice made by so many Irish men in the last war.'*

and artillery, he led 400 of his colleagues to safety without giving a second thought for his life. But the change in regime in 1922, welcomed by most on the island, ensured that John Ormsby's bravery was erased from the nation's memory. Whatever the politics of that conflict, 100 years ago, it's good to see that remembrance, on a personal level, is now not only possible but actually embraced. Local people across the island are setting aside the past and remembering not just those who fought for independence but those too who fought in the world wars.

I know I only wrote about issues touching on remembrance in the last edition of *Irish Roots*, but maybe some things are worth repeating. On the Sunday of our weekend in Co Mayo, we attended morning service in Ballina Church of Ireland. It was, unsurprisingly, a small congregation. We received, nevertheless, a wonderfully warm and generous welcome. After the service coffee was served, and – as is the tradition in Ireland – we soon found common bonds with those we talked with, particularly people we knew in common. We also noted the memorials on the church walls and the poppy wreath hung to bring to mind those from the congregation who had served and died in conflicts. Outside we observed the huge number of gravestones in the grounds attached to the church, denoting a once large and vibrant Protestant population. These were on the whole just ordinary folks: workers, farmers and shopkeepers, the vast majority of whom dispersed in the years after partition. Feeling unwelcome or uneasy after the civil war, they headed to new lives in England, North America or the Antipodes. Their input into civil society is now long lost to Ireland, but hopefully, like the lives lost to Laherdane in the sinking of the Titanic, in years to come they will be remembered.

*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.*



**In the last edition we looked at one method of locating the living descendants of your Irish ancestor's siblings. This involved a methodical search through the birth, marriage and death registers to determine whether they survived infancy, married and had issue in Ireland or whether they died unmarried or emigrated. There is another method that can be employed to identify survivors of your Irish ancestor's family in Ireland.**

While you may want to find out what happened to all of your ancestor's siblings and their descendants, if you can find one living descendant, they may have information that will help you to find out what happened to some of the others. One of the easiest ways to locate a descendant who remained in Ireland is to research the occupancy of the family address using property records.

Your search starts with your family's street or townland address in Ireland. Birth certificates for your ancestor and their siblings should record the family address. Obtaining several birth certificates over a period of time will tell you whether the family changed address or remained in the same place. You will need to work from the last known address associated with the family, so check the birth certificate for their last born child. This method can also be applied to descendants of a sibling of your ancestor who married and settled elsewhere in Ireland. A birth certificate

for their youngest child will indicate where they were living.

Once you have identified an address, you can trace the occupancy of this property forward using the Valuation Office Revision Books. These books are manuscript copies of Griffith's Valuation that were updated periodically to record any changes in the ownership, occupancy, size and value of a land or house holding. The Revision Books should document the occupancy of a property from the 1850s right up to the 1970s, when rates were no longer levied on residential property.

The Revision Books will tell you how long someone remained the occupier of a property. At the time of their death the property should transfer to their widow or son. This will help you to identify the next generation who remained living on the family property. If the property passed to someone with a different surname it means that the family have moved or that the property was

transferred to the husband of a married daughter. Transfer of a property to a son-in-law is not uncommon and it is always worth checking for a marriage between a female with your family surname and the person who took over the property.

If your family disappear from the property it means that they have left that address. Before you assume that they all emigrated, try checking the Revision Book for all of the neighbouring townlands, it is quite possible that the family moved to another property nearby.

The Revision Books for the Republic of Ireland are located in the Valuation Office in the Irish Life Centre in Dublin City. They are not available online and must be inspected manually. The Revision Books for Northern Ireland are freely available on the website of the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI): [http://www.proni.gov.uk/index/search\\_the\\_archives/val12b.htm](http://www.proni.gov.uk/index/search_the_archives/val12b.htm)

Pursuing the occupancy of a property beyond the scope of the Revision Books can be done using Electoral Rolls and Street Directories. Electoral Rolls will identify the registered voters at each address and should help you to determine how long members of the family, who had reached the age of majority, were residing at the same address after the 1970s. The Electoral Rolls are organised by address and it is important that you try to establish the correct constituency and electoral division as this will help you to navigate them effectively. Electoral Rolls can be found in county archives and libraries as well as the National Library of Ireland. They are not usually a complete and comprehensive collection, so be prepared to encounter gaps in these records.

For families living in urban areas, you can trace the occupancy of an address forward using Street Directories, like Thom's Dublin Directory, which is published up to the present day and will record the name of the head of the household.

Once you have established the most recent address that you can find for your ancestor's family in Ireland using property records, it is time to exploit one of our most valuable resources, local knowledge. If you have established that your ancestor's nephew lived at a certain address until at least 1978, speaking to elderly neighbours of that address may help you to find out what happened to your relative and his family. Try contacting the parish priest, the local library, historical society or post office for the area and ask to be put in touch with someone who would remember families from the area in the 1960s and 1970s. Local memory in Ireland can go back over 100 years and you are bound to find someone who may have helpful information. If you are planning to visit the address, send a letter or call in advance so that they are prepared for your arrival. Surprising a long lost cousin on their doorstep might not always elicit a warm reception.

Once you make contact with one descendant branch of your family tree your newly found cousin may be able to help you find out what happened to the other branches.

Another route to locating surviving descendants of your ancestor is to investigate death records.

Tracing the occupancy of a property using the land records described above should indicate when the head of the family was deceased and their property passed on to another generation. Using the approximate year of death for this individual you can search for their death

registration in the civil death index, which is freely available online at [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

The death registration should tell you their age, occupation and marital status as well as the date and cause of death and the name of the person who registered the death. If the informant was one of his sons or daughters you have evidence of a descendant that was residing in or near the family home at the time of the death.

A date of death will facilitate a search for a newspaper death notice or obituary. A death notice, report on a funeral or obituary may tell you a great deal about the living relatives of the deceased person. The chief mourners at a funeral are often identified, including the widow, sons and married daughters of the deceased. Identifying the married names of the daughters of the deceased will help you to search for their marriage certificates and the issue of their marriages. A newspaper report may also identify cousins, nieces and nephews and grandchildren of the deceased, all of whom were alive at the time of death and can be pursued forward. Some newspaper notices also include a request to foreign papers to copy the notice. If the death notice states 'Australian papers please copy' it suggests that the deceased had family who emigrated to Australia. This could save you many hours of research spent looking for these individuals in Ireland, North America or the Great Britain.

Newspaper death notices, funeral reports and obituaries are most commonly found in local rather than national newspapers. Use the Newspaper Database on the website of the National Library of Ireland (<http://www.nli.ie/en/catalogues-and-databases-printed-newspapers.aspx>) to identify the newspapers published in the town nearest to your ancestor's residence and the extent to which they survive. Many of these newspapers will not yet have been digitised, so may have to be consulted at the National Library of Ireland or the British Newspaper Library, who hold an extensive Irish collection.

If the deceased left a will, this may name one or more of their surviving children as executors or beneficiaries. Once you have established where and when the death took place, you can search the Calendar of Wills and Administrations in the National Archives of Ireland for testamentary records and references to surviving descendants of the deceased. The Calendars prior to 1858 have now been digitised and are available at [www.findmypast.ie](http://www.findmypast.ie). However, few of these wills actually survive and the Calendars themselves are not very informative. The Calendars that commence in 1858

*'If you are planning to visit the address, send a letter or call in advance so that they are prepared for your arrival. Surprising a long lost cousin on their doorstep might not always elicit a warm reception.'*

will record the name of the executor and the value of the estate and from 1858 to 1922 (excluding Northern Ireland after 1918) are available on the National Archives of Ireland genealogy site: <http://www.willcalendars.nationalarchives.ie/search/cwa/home.jsp>. The calendars for the Republic of Ireland from 1922 until 1982 are available on the website of the National Archives as downloadable pdfs. The records for Northern Ireland can be accessed in part through the PRONI website: [www.proni.gov.uk](http://www.proni.gov.uk)

If you find an entry in the Calendars prior to about 1910, there is a strong likelihood that the will or administration was destroyed in the 1922 Public Records Office fire. However, the National Archives of Ireland hold some surviving district registry will books for the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which should be checked.

I recently found a calendar entry for a will proved in Cork in November 1878. The Will Book survives for that year and a transcript of the full will identified the names and addresses of numerous emigrant children, nieces, nephews and cousins of the deceased, opening up several new lines of enquiry for locating descendants. Copies of wills and administrations proved after about 1910 can be obtained from the National Archives of Ireland. As the addresses of most beneficiaries and executors are recorded in these documents, the information on a will or administration should lead you back to the property records described above and a new address to investigate.

In the next edition we will present a case study as well as look at sources for locating descendants of emigrants overseas.

*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.*