

When Steven Smyrl indulged in researching a random headstone, with a click of a mouse and a wander through some online websites, he discovered the story of some sad lives and early deaths.

...and another thing...

**L**ike gravestones. In their stony silence, they say a lot about people, all long dead. I like their variety, their colour, their durability. I like the possibility of being able to date them from their style even when the inscription is almost worn away. Some provide details about a tight family group, while others list several generations, spanning two or more centuries.

They are one of genealogists' best friends, so it's no surprise that so much effort is put into the permanent preservation of their inscriptions. Given the quirks of Irish record keeping, too often gravestone inscriptions are the only surviving record of an individual's existence. Regular readers of my column will know that I have referred previously to the terrific work of Yvonne Russell in transcribing and photographing the headstones at Mount Jerome cemetery, Dublin's largest Protestant cemetery (see [igp-web.com/IGPArchives](http://igp-web.com/IGPArchives)). So, I'm going to indulge myself by taking the inscription from one of Yvonne's photographs and seeing what I can establish about the family named using online sources, as an example of just what can now be achieved searching the Net. The inscription is this one: "In Loving Memory of Anne, Widow of the Late Denis Lymbery Esq., of Blenheim, Co. Waterford. She departed This Life 13<sup>th</sup> August 1862, Aged 65 Years. Rebecca Louisa, Their Youngest Daughter, Died 25<sup>th</sup> June 1865, Aged 29 Years. William Gregory, Their Youngest Son, Died 14<sup>th</sup> April 1866, Aged 32 Years." So, briefly, Anne (surname unknown) was born about 1797; she married Denis Lymbery and they had at least four children. The youngest girl was Rebecca Louisa, born about 1836 and the youngest boy was William Gregory, born about 1834. Denis was dead by August 1862.

A Google search soon found reference to a John Lymbery who had married a Rebecca Doyle and died in 1813 leaving two sons, one of whom was Denis (of Blenheim), the man named on the gravestone. A grant of probate for the estate of Denis Lymbery of Blenheim issued from Waterford Diocesan Court in 1846 and a newspaper death notice for his widow, Anne, indicated that she died at Annville, Cullenswood (which is in Ranelagh, Dublin). Further Googling found a post from a researcher stating they believed that William Gregory was born 22 May 1838, son of Denis Lymbery of Blenheim and Hezekiah Lymbery (nee Mailey). This of course conflicts, the name being Anne on the gravestone! The same source notes that William had two sisters, Rebecca Louisa Lymbery and Anne Sophia Forrester (married woman).

Hezekiah is presumably an error given that a licence issued in 1827 from the Waterford Diocesan Court for the marriage of

Denis Lymbery and Anne Mailey. Of the three known children born to Denis and Anne, it was possible to establish these facts from online sources:

i) Anna Sophia Lymbery: she married Thomas Alfred Forrester (not Forrester) at St. Michael's Church of Ireland church, Limerick, 23 November 1865. However, she died less than two years later in Cork city, in May 1867, aged 35 (thus born about 1832), after giving birth to a son, William, born 14 May 1867. Anna's widowed husband, Thomas Alfred Forrester, then remarried in Dublin, 15 December 1868, to Marianne Jones, with whom he went on to have a large family.

ii) William Gregory Lymbery: up to his death in April 1866, he conducted the business of tea and coffee dealer and wine and spirit merchant from premises on St Andrew's Street, Dublin. He had married Jane Collins at St Peter's Church of Ireland church, Dublin, 31 July 1860. Their last child was a daughter (first name not recorded) born the year civil registration of birth began in Ireland, at 5 Cullenswood, Ranelagh, on 21 July 1864.

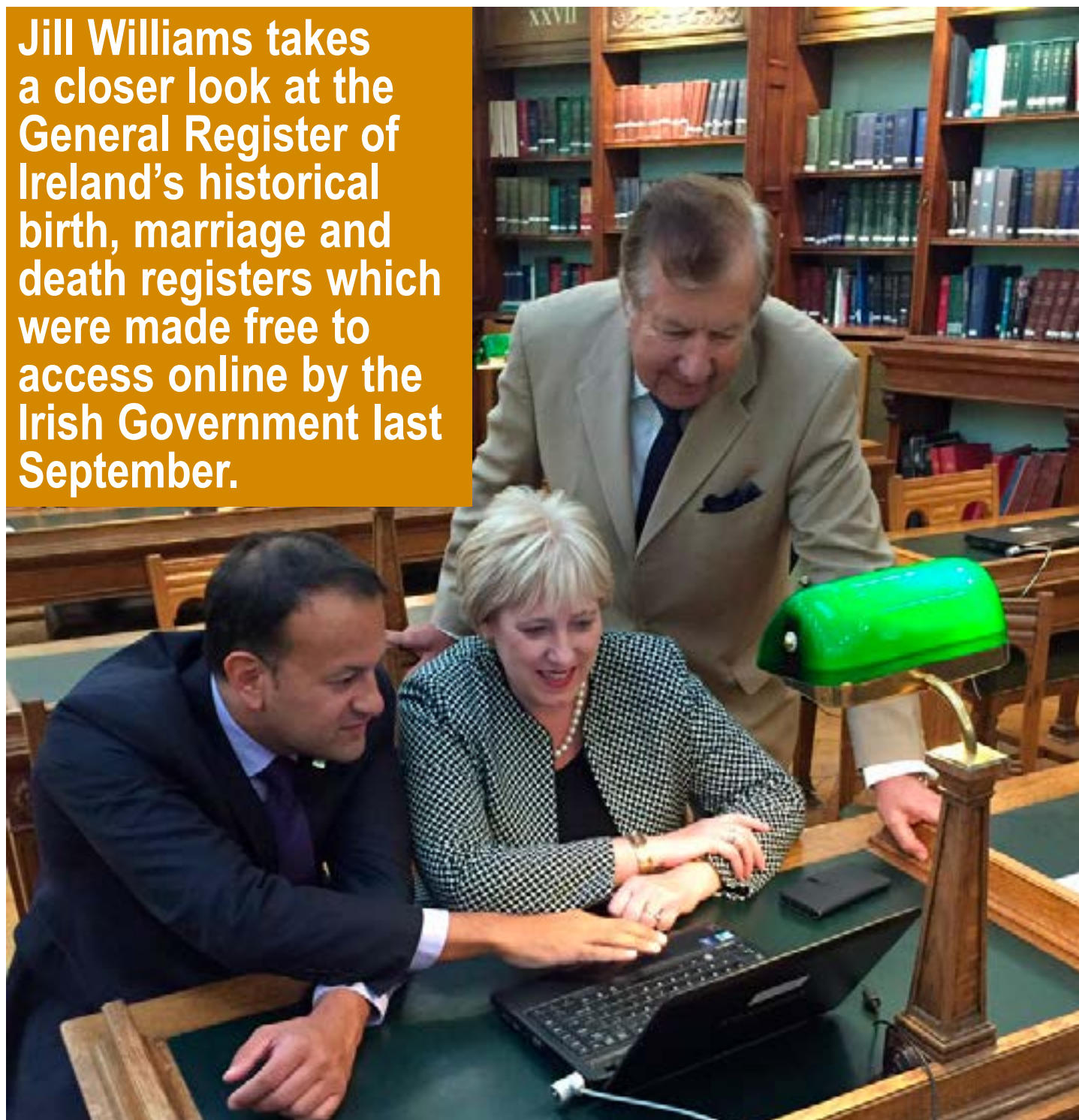
By the time of the 1901 and 1911 census William's wife Jane was living at 137 Rathmines Road, Dublin, with her unmarried daughter, Eleanor Jane (born in Dublin about 1862). By then, both were noting their religious denomination as Baptist. Jane died on 24 December 1916, aged 79, at the same address and her death was registered by "E. Lymbery, 137 Rathmines Road", no doubt her daughter, Eleanor. In turn, Eleanor (Ellen) Jane died on 4 February 1945 aged "about 80" at 15 Bishop Street, Dublin. Eleanor's will was proved on 15 March 1945, at which time her address at Bishop Street was described as the Moravian Widows Alms House.

iii) Rebecca Louisa Lymbery: her death registration noted that she was single, a milliner, late of 5 Peafield Terrace, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, aged 29, thus born about 1836.

I chose the Lymbery headstone at random, not knowing that it would prove to be a rather sad tale of short lives and early deaths. All the information was discovered through data now available online, only the click of a mouse away, using just these seven websites: [irishancestors.ie](http://irishancestors.ie), [nationalarchives.ie](http://nationalarchives.ie), [freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com](http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com), [irishnewsarchive.com](http://irishnewsarchive.com), [myheritage.com](http://myheritage.com), [igp-web.com/IGPArchives](http://igp-web.com/IGPArchives) and [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org). So go on...why don't you indulge yourself too?

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**Jill Williams takes a closer look at the General Register of Ireland's historical birth, marriage and death registers which were made free to access online by the Irish Government last September.**



The 8<sup>th</sup> September 2016 was a great day for many in the Irish genealogy world as on that day the Irish government provided free access to the General Register of Ireland's historical civil registers of birth, marriage and death on the [www.irishgenealogy.ie](http://www.irishgenealogy.ie) website.

**S**o what exactly were we given? Essentially we have an index to civil registrations (vital records) to which 11.6 million images have been attached. Births 1864-1915, Marriages 1882-1940, Deaths 1891-1965. Please note that from 1922 onwards these images do not include the 6 counties in Northern Ireland.

This is not a searchable database of transcripts, which means you cannot just search for all the birth records in a particular townland or to get a list of

all the Quaker marriages in a particular year. This is just an index which points you to the particular page where the relevant birth, marriage or death register image is held.

### **A Little Bit Of Background**

Civil registration in Ireland began in 1845 with the compulsory registration of non-Catholic marriages. In 1864 civil registration was extended to include Catholic marriages and from this date full registration of all births, marriages

and deaths were required. The system was based on the public health system of the time.

163 workhouses were built in Ireland between 1838 and 1852; each in the centre of an area termed a Poor Law Union. These were usually based in a market town and had the catchment area of the town and about 10 miles around it. These union boundaries crossed both parish and country boundaries. In 1851 each union was sub-divided into 4 or 5 "Dispensary districts" each with

a medical officer, usually a doctor, in charge. When full registration of births marriages and deaths was introduced in 1864 the 163 Poor Law Unions (PLU) were designated Superintendant Registrar's District (SRD). The "Dispensary District" was now termed the Registrar's District – and in most cases the medical officer doubled up as the Registrar, collecting the registrations within his district. He forwarded these returns to the Superintendant Registrar on a quarterly basis. The Superintendant Registrar was responsible for all the registers within the SRD (old Poor Law Union), and he copied these registers and sent a copy to the General Register Office. It is these copies that we can now access. These are the registers that are used to provide birth, marriage and death certificates from the GRO.

### Using [www.irishgenealogy.ie](http://www.irishgenealogy.ie)

Select the Civil Records from the tab at the top of the home screen and enter the name you are researching and a date range. The results appear with a count by event –b/m/d, and by Superintendants Registration District. These results can be filtered by event or registration district. Clicking on an item from the results on the right of the page takes you to another page. When this has the word image at the bottom of the screen, select this and then you will be taken to the page in the register.

*Tip If you know the townland but don't know the PLU, (PLU = the Superintendant's Registration District), then check the 1851 Townlands database at [www.thecore.com/seanruad](http://www.thecore.com/seanruad)*

If you are not familiar with which registration districts cover the county you are interested in, there is a very handy tool from Shane Wilson see the Registration Districts Map Browser at [www.swilson.info](http://www.swilson.info)

Birth Registers provide; date & place of birth, given name, sex, father's name, occupation and dwelling place, mother's name and maiden name, date of registration. The person registering the birth signed and supplied their name and qualification –e.g. "present at birth". The registrar also signed.

Marriage Registers provide: Date and place of marriage, names of bride and groom and their age, (in years or just Full meaning 21 or over), marital status (spinster, bachelor, widow or widower), occupation, residence at time of marriage, father's name and occupation of both bride and groom, names of the witnesses to the marriage and of the clergyman who performed the service.

Death Registers provide: Date and place of death, name of deceased, sex, age, marital status, occupation, cause of

death and duration of any illness, name & residence of informant of death (who may not be a relative) and qualification e.g. present at death, date of registration and Registrar's name. Remember information given about the deceased and their age depended on how well the informant knew the deceased so may be approximate at best. If you see that the information is from the coroner then it is worth looking up local newspapers for more information as to the circumstances surrounding the death. Note death registers do not provide a date of birth or normally a woman's maiden name. However in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in some parts of the country widows resumed their maiden name upon the death of their husband.

In the earlier years of registration it is likely that significant numbers of



births marriages and deaths remained unregistered but by 1880 recording was much more comprehensive.

### Having Difficulty Locating That Record?

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century people did not celebrate birthdays like today so many would not be sure of how old they were, when recording their age - so broaden the years of your search.

Did the person have two first names e.g. Daniel Joseph? This index is only on the first name Daniel. My great uncle was in the census as Joe and always known as that in the family. Not finding him in the register under Joseph I changed approach. At that point I searched just for the surname, without a first name, in the right registration district over a period of at least 5 years and then systematically went through the results checking the parents. It turns out that at birth he was registered as Daniel Joseph.

Can't find the record try adding or subtracting O or Mc to or from the surname. There were less Os and Mcs in earlier registers.

In reality many families had two names, one for official documents and another by which they were commonly known to their friends, relations and

neighbours. This was due in part to the differences in language with many instances being translations Irish to English and visa versa. E.g. Johnson, son of John is interchangeable with Mc Shane, Smith with MacGowan, or O'Gowan Need more variant spellings of the name? Use surname search at [www.johngrenham.com](http://www.johngrenham.com)

The search facility on the website [www.irishgenealogy.ie](http://www.irishgenealogy.ie) is very basic. So here are a few examples that may help clarify what I mean. Search for surname Connor will get you Connor and Connors but not O Connor Search for OConnor will return OConnor, O Connor, Oconnor and OConnor but not O'Connor.

Search for Johanna/Joanna gives Johanna, Johana, Johannah, Joan, Joanna,

but not Hanna so you may need to play around with your searches to get all you need.

It appears that when a widow remarries, the official online index appears to include her in the index under her maiden name only.

Wrong image? Go to the web address at the top of the page e.g.

[https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth\\_returns/births\\_1874/03132/2148555.pdf](https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth_returns/births_1874/03132/2148555.pdf) The final number is the one you need 2148555, add 1 to page forwards, subtract 1 to page backwards.

### The Future

Last autumn we were told that the General Register Office was currently working on providing Marriages dating back to 1845 and Deaths back to 1864 and planned to add them in a future site update. - This is still the plan but there is no timetable as yet for when these additional images will be added.

Jill Williams from Cork is a Fellow of the Irish Genealogical Research Society, with a particular interest in websites to use for Irish family history. Jill is an experienced, popular teacher and speaker on Irish genealogy.

*Photo opposite page: L:R The Minister for Social Protection, Leo Varadkar T.D., and the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Heather Humphreys T.D. at the historical civil registers launch. Pictured with Antarctic explorer Tom Crean's grandson Brendan O'Brien who can now access his famous grandfather's birth, marriage and death registers online.*



Exploring some Irish wedding customs from the past can be useful in understanding the mind-set and life journeys of your ancestors. This article looks at typical traditions from the nineteenth to early twentieth century practised by Roman Catholic small farmers who lived in rural Ireland.

The traditional Irish wedding was a far simpler occasion than the weddings we see today. Weddings were treated as occasions of celebration marked by feasting, but were low-key and often held in the home of the bride.

### Arranging The Marriage

Amongst the Catholic rural peasantry marriage was seen as a serious business rather than a romantic one with much consideration given to property and available funds. Arranging the marriage was done through a hired matchmaker or conducted between parents. Matchmaking usually took place at Fairs or at local public houses. Marriage was tightly regulated by parents who used it to maintain or advance their family's societal position and the marriage of the eldest son was critical in maintaining the farm, as was the marriage of the eldest daughter. Elopement was rare: if say, a marriage took place between a farmer's

eldest daughter and a landless labourer it would have been frowned upon and the couple would have had few financial resources to help them. By adhering to the traditional rules of marriage, society was managed and structured.

In arranging a match, parents would have to consider the birth order of the bride or groom to be. The Catholic rural Irish tended to have families of a large size and possessions and income being limited meant that any inheritance was carefully divided according to tradition. In order to protect the most important asset - the family home and farm - and to provide parents care as they got older, the convention was that the eldest son inherited. The farm was inherited in one piece, it was not broken up, with the implicit understanding that the eldest son would only inherit when he married and would manage the farm until his eldest child would inherit it. The eldest daughter got a dowry which enabled her to marry. Often means were so scarce that when the eldest son got

the dowry from his future wife, it went straight to his oldest sister to pay for her own dowry. The rest of the siblings in the family had to make their own way without any inheritance. Their options were to migrate to towns for work or become landless farm labourers, which offered very few prospects. In a country underdeveloped industrially, emigration provided the best way of making a living for people with no inheritance.

### The Wedding

Lavishness and generosity was and remains a feature of Irish weddings with lots of food and drink provided to guests. In the past prosperous brides bought a wedding dress but for those of more modest means a new outfit was purchased which could be worn again on special occasions.

Weddings could not take place during Lent or Advent and this led to the popularity of the June wedding. Many people believed that to leave a Child of Prague statue outside on the eve of the