



## Tony Hennessy Explains Why NOW Is Always The Best Time To Draw Your Family Tree

For many people (and I may be one...) the business of tracing one's family tree starts out as a passing interest, then discreetly, stealthily even, moves on to becoming a real fascination before it suddenly and with little or no warning bursts forth into a full-blown obsession, catching one's self and those all around you completely by surprise! Luckily 'Full Obsession' mode is difficult to maintain for lengthy periods and I suspect may be advised against by one's doctor. It usually comes in waves, with months or even years between the troughs and the next peak!

I would like to think that all those reading this article believe that engaging with one's family history is a meaningful and very worthwhile pursuit. Many folks both within the world of genealogy and beyond it have a raised awareness of themselves as just one part of a greater family story, a continuum spanning time and space and that the ancestors, those they remember and also those maybe long gone, are a real living presence that they carry with them in their everyday lives.

Undertaking genealogical research for any length of time invariably results in the gathering of copy documents, photographs, newspaper cuttings and other ephemera as well as lots of computer files. For some the results of a lifetime's dedicated research ends up in old suitcases under the bed, assorted biscuit tins, lever-arch files on the shelf, electronic files on PCs, CDs (maybe even floppy disks!), in the cloud and the two old laptops you're afraid to throw out

just in case.... And you are the only person in the world who can make any sense of it! If this is the case with you dear reader it is now time to draw a family tree. When you draw a family tree, three good things will happen to you:

1. You will immediately feel a wonderful sense of relief as all your hard work has been saved forever in an easily accessible form.
2. You can hang your new chart on the wall which will bring you continued contentment and joy.
3. You can share your family tree with your extended family who will be delighted and who will remember you with great fondness and appreciation for generations to come.

### TYPES OF FAMILY TREES

There are many different types of family trees and they come in lots of different styles. Here are the four most common types:

- A Descendant Tree: This has the

primary couple at the top and includes all their direct descendants and their spouses/ partners. A descendant tree focuses on one branch of the family only.

- An Ancestor Tree: This type of tree has the primary person (or couple) at the bottom and includes all their direct ancestors. It spans all branches and family surnames and includes one's two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents etc.
- An Ancestor + Siblings Tree: As the name implies this includes all the names on an ancestor tree plus their respective siblings. So, there's a home for aunts and uncles, grandaunts and granduncles etc. on this chart.
- An Hourglass Tree: This is simply an ancestor tree sitting on top of a descendant tree with the primary couple or person in the middle. This is a very popular family tree to mark an occasion such as grandparents'

# A Child's Christmas In Nineteenth Century Ireland



By Dr. Mary Hatfield

As we approach another holiday season, many of us may pause to reflect on the ways that the celebration of Christmas has changed during our lifetime. At least once, if not more, during the lead up to Christmas I will hear my mother comment on how much simpler Christmas was when they were growing up. There was still the excitement of Christmas morning and unwrapping presents beside the tree, but there was not as much fuss, and certainly not as much money spent.

**T**he association of Christmas with gift-giving, feasting, and excess is not just a phenomenon of the late twentieth century, since the 1840s many aspects of Christmas have been commanded by enthusiastic marketing, advertising, and mercantile interests. In 1890 George Bernard Shaw commented that 'Christmas is forced on a reluctant and disgusted nation by the shopkeepers and the press.' His grumbling indicates just how much the celebration of Christmas had been transformed during the previous fifty years. The Victorians were responsible for initiating many of the traditions now firmly established in the celebration of the winter holidays. They wanted to exchange the rowdy drunkenness and feasting associated with the holiday for a more domesticated, family-centred affair.

The Christmas tree was brought to England by Queen Victoria and became popular in Ireland during the 1840s. Traditionally, trees were brought into the home and decorated on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December, the feast of the Immaculate Conception. They stayed in the home

until the Feast of the Epiphany, or little Christmas, on January 6<sup>th</sup>. Little Christmas is also known as *Nollaig na mBan*, the women's Christmas, as the men were supposed to be responsible for all the household duties that day. On Christmas Eve many Irish Catholics placed candles, *Coinneal Mór na Nollag*, in their windows to show that their homes were ready to receive and welcome Mary and Joseph for the birth of Jesus. During the penal era, the candle also would have signalled to itinerant priests that the home was a safe place to say mass.

For many Irish children the most exciting aspect of Christmas is the anticipation of opening a new toy on Christmas morning. Since the nineteenth century manufacturers and retail outlets have ensured that every parent knows how important it is to have this year's most desired toy under the tree on Christmas morning. In 1861, Queen's Old Castle Company in Cork took out a large advertisement in *The Cork Examiner* to remind readers that Christmas was approaching and their toys and fancy goods selection direct from Paris, were ideal presents. Even a brief glance through old editions of the *Irish Times*

or the *Belfast Telegraph* during the month of December indicate how important this time of year was for merchants and craftsmen who advertised dolls, trains sets, racquets, hoops, and marbles for their youngest patrons.

Of course, toys were not always something that parents bought, more often in the eighteenth and nineteenth century toys were homemade. Dolls were crafted out of linen and cotton, stuffed with sheep's wool, and given embroidered faces. Tops were hand carved from lumps of wood, as were puzzle pieces or perhaps a pair of dice. In the 1780s the idea that toys were something to be bought, rather than made, was beginning to take root in places like Dublin, Cork, and Belfast. Dublin's 'Pantheon Phusitechnikon' was established in the late eighteenth century as a purveyor of children's toys and goods. Its proprietor William Binns advertised the goods available in his St. Stephen's Green premises in printed pamphlets distributed to parents and children alike.

Maria Edgeworth, the famous author of *Castle Rackrent* and *Belinda*, wrote,

# Donna Moughty Asks Is it Time to Research in Ireland?

As I'm writing this in October 2021, my thoughts are definitely in Ireland where I would be if not for COVID. This is the second year that I have had to postpone the research trip where I take 15 researchers to Dublin or Belfast. With all of the material that has appeared online for Irish researchers, do you really need to go to Ireland? Well, the first reason you want to visit Ireland is because it is a wonderful, beautiful place with very friendly people. In addition, as an Irish researcher you will find material that is not now (and likely not in my lifetime) online. And as a bonus, you might even find some of your relatives!

You should begin your Research Trip in either Dublin or Belfast, depending on your research interests. Preparation is the key to a successful trip. Are you comfortable travelling alone or would you prefer to travel with a group? Will you have family members with you who perhaps don't share your enthusiasm for family history? Travelling with a group provides companionship as well as people with whom you can share your successes. If you know exactly what you're looking for and where to go, then travelling alone is not a problem. Over the past 10 years, I've had multiple people tell me that they accomplished more by having orientations at each repository to prepare them for their research.

It's important to know where your ancestors lived in Ireland. Irish research is difficult enough, what with common names (both surnames and given names). Without knowing the locality your research attempts will be frustrating and you may end up researching the wrong family. Researching in Ireland is also different because most of the research facilities are "closed stacks" which means you have to request the documents, not just browse the stacks. Dr. Desmond McCabe, one of the Archivists at The

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) tells people that researching in a repository like PRONI is different, because in many cases you don't know what you're looking for and that's okay. You are not likely to be searching for your ancestor by name in the various catalogs, but more likely for the location where they lived, or perhaps the name of their landlord or for local history information to put the family in context.

If your ancestors were from one of the counties in the Republic of Ireland, you'll want to begin in Dublin. The main repositories are: the National Library <http://www.nli.ie>, the National Archives <https://www.nationalarchives.ie>, the Valuation Office <https://www.valoff.ie/en/archive-research/genealogy/> and the Registry of Deeds <https://www.prai.ie/registry-of-deeds-services/#records>.

Although Irish Civil Registration is online (with certain limitations) records outside of the privacy restrictions are available in Ireland at the General Register Office <https://tinyurl.com/suz3bw6c>. Before you leave, you should check the Sources database (<http://sources.nli.ie>) at the National Library. This database contains over 180,000 entries for manuscripts and articles in periodicals up until the 1980s.

These records were taken from *Manuscript Sources for the History of Irish Civilisation*, a project initiated by Richard J. Hayes, the Director of the Library beginning in 1941. The manuscripts are not all at the National Library and the record detail will tell you the location of the manuscript and its call number, i.e., The Public Records Office Dublin (now the National Archives); Belfast Public Records Office (PRONI) or even repositories outside Ireland. The Valuation Office holds the Valuation Revision Books from Griffith's Valuation for the counties in the Republic and in some cases these go up to the 1980s. Perhaps the land you identified in Griffith's Valuation is still in the hands of a family member. Some of the records have been digitized and can be viewed on computers at the Valuation Office, others are still in manuscript form. None are currently online.

The Registry of Deeds has memorials of deeds, conveyances and wills, 1708-1929. You will find primarily Protestant ancestors at the Registry, especially in the early years, but by the 19th Century, you'll find Catholics, especially those that were merchants or were better off. Other Archives of interest in the Dublin area are the Representative Church Body Library for Church of Ireland research,