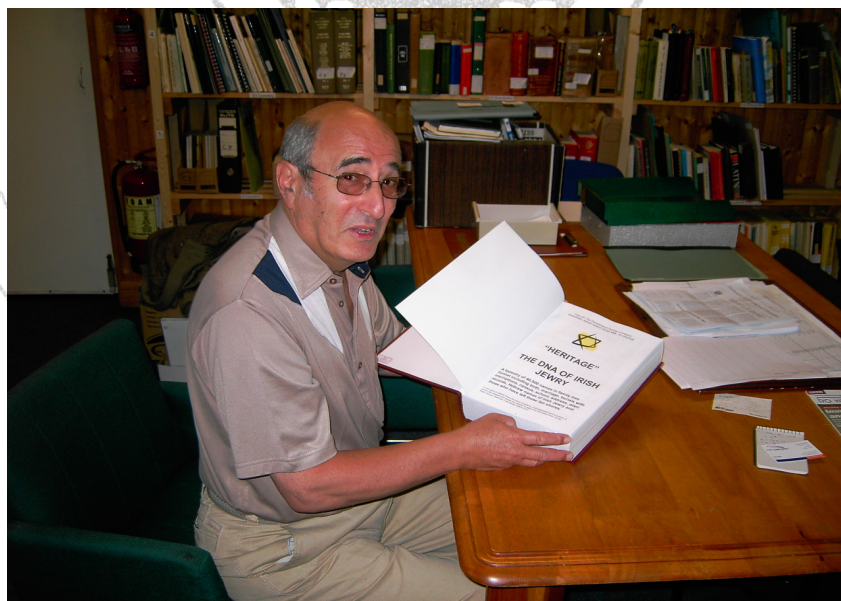




Cumann Seinealais na hÉireann
Genealogical Society of Ireland

DEVELOPING A PLAN
TO
CAPTURE THE FULL VALUE
OF OUR
GENEALOGICAL HERITAGE



*Submission to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on
Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht*

10 December 2013

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Cover photograph: Mr. Stuart Rosenblatt, PC, FGSI, with one of his seventeen volumes on the archival heritage of the Irish-Jewish Community at the Society's Archives & Research Centre, *An Daonchartlann*, at the Carlisle Pier, Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin

Genealogical Society of Ireland – www.familyhistory.ie

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Genealogical Society of Ireland has taken a holistic approach to this important national issue by assessing our genealogical heritage in its many and varied aspects including whether it is a **‘product’** or a **‘resource’**. This is an essential question as it impacts greatly on the manner in which other aspects of our genealogical heritage can be assessed in relation to the development of a plan as proposed.

The Society’s submission considers each of the various areas that have a significant contribution to make to the promotion of an awareness, appreciation and knowledge of our genealogical heritage or to the further development of genealogy in education, scientific research, roots tourism and other important sectors.

As each member of the Oireachtas Joint Committee may have a particular interest in specific areas, each topic is explored in a separate chapter which provides the information on the area considered followed by the Society’s recommendations for the particular area. **Please see page 2 for the listing.**

The Society’s recommendations cover public policy issues, government or state agency actions, legislative proposals, product development, funding and the involvement of the ‘genealogical community’ – both voluntary and commercial. The recommendations proffer suggestions for consideration in the formulation and implementation of a *National Policy on Genealogy*.

That Society strongly believes that the formulation and development of a plan must be an inclusive, transparent and meaningful consultative process where all stakeholders have an important contribution to make towards achieving the worthy objective set by the Oireachtas Joint Committee.

In addressing the issue – ***‘Developing a Plan to Capture the Full Value of our Genealogical Heritage’*** it is easy to see the matter from a purely economic perspective relating specifically to tourism or as a straightforward archival access problem to be resolved by more State investment, increased staffing levels, improved technology and, of course, the hope of philanthropy.

Capturing the *‘Full Value of Our Genealogical Heritage’* is as much an intriguing objective as it is a complex, multifaceted and, in some respects, a very contentious and ambitious endeavour involving many different stakeholders across a number of sectors including the state, commercial interests, voluntary organisations, institutional and private custodians of records and others.

At the outset we have included information on the Society and its unique approach to these matters as it operates quite differently to other voluntary genealogical organisations in Ireland. The Society has a long record stretching back over twenty-three years of advocacy on genealogical and heritage matters at local, national and international levels.

Representing the Society are the following:

Michael Merrigan, MA, FGSI, General Secretary

Thomas Conlon, MSc, MGSI, Director of Internet Services

Aiden Feerick, BA, MAPGI, MGSI, Member of the Society

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE SOCIETY

The Society was established in 1990 to promote an awareness, appreciation and knowledge of our genealogical and heraldic heritage in Ireland and amongst her Diaspora.

It is devoted to the promotion of the study of genealogy and related subjects as educational leisure pursuits available to all in the community irrespective of age, prior-learning, background, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation or socio-economic circumstances by organising two Open Meetings each month throughout the year, lectures, workshops, publishing genealogical material, group projects, exhibiting at major relevant events and the provision of an Archive and Research Centre, *An Daonchartlann*.

The Society encourages its members, undertaking research in every county in Ireland, to make their research available to others through publication. Through its publications programme, the Society makes accessible to researchers at home and abroad many sources otherwise not available except in their original state. The collection and repatriation of genealogical material is an important function of the Society's Archive and Research Centre.



(Pictured above: A Member undertaking research at the Society's Archives & Research Centre – *An Daonchartlann* – at the Carlisle Pier, Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin)

The Society strives to best practice, excellence and high standards in its publications, activities and research and, encourages such amongst its membership at home and overseas.

The '*Principle of Public Ownership and Right of Access*' to our Irish genealogical heritage is the cornerstone of the Society's national policies on heritage, genealogy and archival matters. The Society is precluded from affiliating with any organisation or group failing to endorse this fundamental principle. *[adopted by the Members at the 1997 Annual General Meeting]*

The Society is an independent not-for-profit voluntary heritage organisation with an Irish and international membership and it is an incorporated body in Ireland with charitable status. It is a Nominating Body for Seanad Éireann and has received a Grant of Arms from the Chief Herald of Ireland.

In August 2013 it was elected to membership of FIAV - *Fédération internationale des associations vexillologiques* (International Federation of Vexillological Associations) at the International Congress held at Rotterdam.

The Society is the only Irish organisation represented on this prestigious international body with members in over 40 countries around the world.

The Society is governed by a Board of Directors elected annually by the members. The Board meets on a monthly basis right throughout the year.

As a registered charity in Ireland (CHY 10672), the Society is funded by its members' subscriptions and kind donations from the general public and from those with Irish ancestry overseas. Annual audited accounts are available on the website of the Companies Registration Office. Membership is open to all interested in genealogy, heraldry, vexillology, social history and related subjects.

The Society has two specialised branches – *Heraldry Ireland : Araltas Éireann* and *Vexillology Ireland : Brateolaíocht Éireann* and operates an important collaborative academic genetic genealogy project (*Irish DNA Atlas Project*) with the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.

The Society does *not* accept commercial genealogical research assignments from individuals and routinely directs such enquiries to the Association of Professional Genealogists in Ireland (APGI) and to the various companies providing such services.

The Society has proposed the establishment of the '*Irish Institute of Genealogical and Heraldic Studies*' incorporating the '*Centre for Diaspora and Migration Studies*' to be located in Dublin as totally new educational and heritage asset for Ireland. The Board of the Society established a Foundation to promote the facility and to seek philanthropic or grant aid funding for this important initiative.

For the information of the Committee and in the interest of clarity, although the Society was a founding member of the Council of Irish Genealogical Organisations (CIGO) and indeed, drafted its original constitution and hosted the inaugural meeting of CIGO on July 9th 1994 in Dún Laoghaire, differences on public policy matters prevented the Society from renewing its annual membership subscription to CIGO in 1998.

Over the past twenty-three years, the Society has encouraged the tabling of Parliamentary Questions in Dáil Éireann; raising matters on the Order of Business in Seanad Éireann; advocating amendments to Bills in both Houses; drafted Bills for presentation to Teachtaí Dála and Seanadóirí; made numerous submissions to State agencies, government departments and local government; formulated and published detailed proposals on many heritage issues.

The Society has always been to the fore in the development and promotion of genealogical and heraldic services in Ireland. Legislative reform has been a core objective of this endeavour and therefore, amendments were sought and secured to many pieces of legislation including:- *The Heritage Act, 1995*, the *National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997*, the *Civil Registration Act, 2004* and in May 2006, the *Genealogy and Heraldry Bill, 2006* was initiated in Seanad Éireann. This Bill was presented by the Society to Irish parliamentarians to repeal the fundamentally flawed sections of the 1997 Act (above) and to provide a sound legislative basis for the State's delivery of heraldic services. This Bill was not enacted and therefore, the Society advised on the drafting of the *National Cultural Institutions Amendment Bill, 2008*.

Following up on its long-running campaign to have the 1926 Census released, it drafted the *Statistics (Heritage Amendment) Bill, 2010* and the *Statistics (Heritage Amendment) Bill, 2011* which was debated at Second Stage in Seanad Éireann on October 16th 2013. The Society drafted the *Statistics (1926 Census) Bill, 2013* which is on the Order Paper for Dáil Éireann with the same objective of releasing this historic census.

It is impossible to recount here the many issues upon which this Society has campaigned since its foundation in 1990 and therefore, a brief account intended as an information piece for our Members and an aide to those researching heritage matters in Ireland is available on the Society's website www.familyhistory.ie. However, for the sake of brevity many issues have not been covered in that on-line article and therefore, information on these areas may be gleaned from the Indexes to either the Society's Journal or to the Monthly Gazette provided on the website.

In the run up to the General Election in 2011, the Society's highly respected record of campaigning on various legislative matters concerning genealogy, heraldry and general heritage matters was further endorsed by the inclusion of the following points in the **Programme for Government**.

- We will promote genealogical tourism by updating the National Cultural Institutions Act in relation to the Genealogical office to put it on a proper statutory footing, modernise its operations and to enable publication of the 1926 census to stimulate genealogy tourism.
- We will also explore philanthropic opportunities for the development of a national archives and genealogy quarter, providing easy access to archives and tapping into an area of cultural tourism which is of huge interest to the vast Irish Diaspora.

As a very proactive campaigning organisation, the Society hugely appreciates the opportunity afforded by the presentation to the Oireachtas Joint Committee to explore fully the various options for the development of a sustainable plan to capture the full value of our genealogical heritage.

Therefore, the Society has produced a comprehensive document covering a number of areas of genealogical and related activities and accordingly proffers recommendations on each. For the sake of clarity, the following board definitions are applied.

Genealogy can be defined as the study of, or the record or table of the descent of a person, family, or group from an ancestor or ancestors; a family tree and it may include the direct descent from an ancestor; lineage or pedigree or the study or investigation of ancestry and family histories generally or specializing in the study of persons of a single or related surnames; clan and sept histories etc.

Heraldry can be defined as the study, or art of devising, granting, and blazoning arms, tracing genealogies of armigers and determining and ruling on questions of rank or protocol, as exercised by an officer of arms; and the history and description in proper terms of armorial bearings and their accessories including armorial ensigns or similar insignia, occasionally involving pomp and ceremony, especially attended with armorial trappings; pageantry.

Vexillology may be defined as the scholarly study of flags, including maritime ensigns etc. The term was coined in 1958 by Dr. Whitney Smith of the United States, the author of many books and articles on this subject. It was originally considered to be a sub-discipline of heraldry and it is occasionally still seen as such; the design and drawing of flags; the creation and development of a body of knowledge about flags of all types, their forms, functions, meaning, history and current usage, and of scientific theories and principles based on that knowledge.

3. GENEALOGY – A PRODUCT OR A RESOURCE?

Whether the State considers genealogy to be a product or a resource is a critically important question that must be comprehensively understood and properly addressed in the formulation of any plan aimed at capturing the full value of our genealogical heritage.

The Society's presentation to the seminar hosted by the Minister in September 2011 at the National Library explored this critically important question and proffered some suggestions. However, it is fair to say that serious divisions emerged between stakeholders on this question.

All the Irish genealogical organisations were represented at the seminar which also included organisations such as Eneclann, AEL Data and Tourism Ireland and professional genealogists, John Grenham, MA, MAPGI, FIGRS, FGSi and Seán Murphy, MA. Observers from the Irish Bishops' Conference were also in attendance. The meeting was chaired by retired High Court judge Bryan McMahon, and the Minister and his officials attended for the full day which was greatly appreciated by all.

The speakers split into two factions: those who supported the expansion of free public access to genealogical records and those who did not. Those supporting free access included, not surprisingly, Dublin City Public Library, the National Archives and the National Library. Those opposing it included the Family History Centres (IFHF), the Ulster Historical Foundation, and the Offaly Historical & Archaeological Society. One of the reasons given for their opposition to the further expansion of free-to-view on-line access to parish records was that it would cause unemployment at the Family History Centres.

The Society proposed the view that genealogy is a resource to be developed for the benefit of the many, rather than a product to be sold for the benefit of the few. In the presentation, the Society also emphasised its commitment to the *Principle of public ownership and right of access* to our genealogical heritage and insisted that these rights apply equally to the Irish diaspora.

It was obvious that the Society's views struck a chord with several organisations, and they were strongly supported by the final speaker, Catriona Crowe of the National Archives. John Grenham spoke of a moral duty to reconnect with the Irish diaspora, and suggested that 'moral generosity' required that our genealogical records be made freely available.

The success of newly revamped and much improved www.irishgenealogy.ie as a '*Genealogy Portal*' is a clear vindication of the 'resource' over 'product' argument as it is an exceptionally useful 'one-stop-shop' for family history providing access to the main on-line resources and offers advice on their use. Although it contains links to '*pay-for-view*' sites, its main website provides access to records of baptisms, marriages and burials *free of charge* from an increasing number of parishes throughout Ireland and soon to host other resources.

Whilst most genealogists, at home and abroad, are rejoicing at the prospect of viewing more and more of parish registers and other resources on-line free of charge, the operators of the heritage centres have reportedly condemned the move as injurious to the financial viability of their centres. The Irish Family History Foundation (IFHF) represents the operators of the various IGP

heritage centres that provide access to local parish records through the website www.rootsireland.ie on a 'pay-for-view' basis.

Viewing genealogy as a resource rather than simply a product is essentially in the national interest as we climb out of these recessionary times and build solid policy foundations for a sustainable future for Irish genealogical services delivered at our national and regional repositories and on-line.

Genealogy is the only resource that can initiate, engage and successfully maintain a connection with our diaspora to create an affinity with Ireland through the promotion of an awareness, appreciation and knowledge of our shared ancestral heritage and by providing free public access to that heritage.

Free public on-line access to our genealogical heritage creates a real and tangible sense of a global ownership of that heritage for our diaspora – it becomes a resource that is shared growing its on-line community in a manner and at a pace that would be extremely difficult to achieve in a pay-for-view environment.

The creation of an affinity with Ireland amongst those of Irish ancestry around the world and sustaining that unique connection through a greater accessibility to our shared genealogical heritage opens up many more possibilities for the development of tourism, inward investment, trade and crucially for economic expansion, networking.

In the national interest, our genealogical heritage must be considered as a communally owned asset and as a public resource to be utilised for the benefit of the people of Ireland.

- **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 That the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht endorse and include in its report on these proceedings a commitment to the **'Principle of Public Ownership and Right of Access'** to our genealogical heritage as was included in the *Report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform on the Draft Heads of the General Scheme of the Freedom of Information Bill 2012* which was published on Wednesday 26th June 2013.
- 3.2 That the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht in its report on these proceedings include a clear and unambiguous statement that the archival records containing representing our genealogical heritage constitute a national resource, the full value of which, shall be utilized for the benefit of the people of Ireland and those of Irish ancestry overseas.
- 3.3 That the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht in its report on these proceedings include a definition of genealogy. [See recommendation no. 17.5 below]

4. EDUCATION – GENEALOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

Adult education and indeed, the return to education following retirement is now a very exciting and welcome feature of modern Irish life. This has much to do with the major economic changes in Ireland over the past twenty years or so and indeed, it has been central to government policy for decades.

Education means empowerment and mobility for women, young mothers and now increasingly, retirees of both sexes. The terms ‘life-long’ and ‘continuing’ education very succinctly capture the essence and the vitality of this important aspect of modern Irish society. Though, for many in Ireland this is now the norm, it is not so for some very vulnerable sections within our communities.

State and local education and training agencies have become increasingly aware of two such groups within our society—senior citizens and young adult males under 25 with minimal formal education. The latter group has experienced a virtual exclusion from the workforce in certain areas and when in employment, low skills and poor education restrict mobility and erode any job security.

Whilst imaginative and innovative steps are now targeted at these young males, the retirees or seniors with limited or no formal education require similar intervention and assistance to enhance the quality of their lives. Some may indeed wish to return on a part-time basis to the workforce, others and possibly the majority want education as a key to inclusivity in the lives of family members in our modern Ireland.

Literacy skills are a must for entry into formal adult education and indeed, many local initiatives aimed at improving literacy skills are extremely successful. Some dealing with the practical application of literacy which many of us take for granted, others deal with a ‘social’ literacy through book or writing clubs.

The Society has always advocated the use of family history as an educational tool for young and the not so young. Familiarity with the subject matter coupled with a requirement to interact with family and friends in the recording of the information makes genealogy an ideal educational tool. Visiting repositories and searching records under a mentoring scheme would create and develop a self confidence and an ability to utilize freely available resources.

The burning desire amongst us all to record and pass on our family’s story is the driving force behind most entrants to the world of genealogy, irrespective of education. But genealogy is only the key to a world of learning where local history, social history and other disciplines easily invite investigation. Indeed, this route to further education has seen hundreds of persons take up formal courses in genealogy and local history in University College Dublin and Maynooth.

Some of the most exciting and well researched material published nowadays on local history is by mature students and graduates of such courses. However, the absence of a structured genealogy course as part of an adult literacy programme is certainly regrettable. The resources are readily available and bodies such as this Society can and should assist in the

production of such courses or specific genealogy modules for adult literacy classes.

As for its inclusion at primary and secondary level, genealogy can be seen as a 'gateway' subject to the understanding of aspects of history, geography, literature and as a 'tool' for the development of research skills.

However, given the multiethnic, multicultural and socially diverse nature of modern Irish society, the introduction of genealogy must be well planned and structures so as to be inclusive and nonjudgemental as to what constitutes a family unit. Indeed, it maybe more appropriate to concentrate on the student's own choice of opting to research either the paternal or maternal line starting with the parent. This allows for all family units to be included without distinction and therefore, attention to nomenclature is important preferring the word 'genealogy' over the possibly more contentious 'family history' in this context.

Genealogy as an educational tool offers inclusivity at a number of levels and is ultimately rewarding for the student and their families. In meeting a social and educational need, this is important.

- **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 That consideration is afforded to the establishment of a working group of appropriately qualified individuals under the direction of the Department of Education and Science to explore the potential of genealogy as an educational tool within the primary and secondary schools system and to make recommendations on its application as aid to the understanding of history, geography and literature and in the development of research techniques and skills.
- 4.2 That consideration is afforded to the creation of **Classroom Genealogy Resource Packs** for the primary school teacher providing a structured approach to introducing genealogy as a cross-curriculum medium into the classroom. Ideally the pack should be developed by primary teachers who have completed a recognised genealogy course (*see recommendation no. 5.3 below*) and should contain lessons that centre on the development of children's sense of curiosity leading to the participation in structured research projects with an array of possible applications for the curriculum. The Classroom Genealogy Resource Pack should be produced in a downloadable format free of charge to the schools and be available in Irish and English.
- 4.3 That consideration is afforded to the use of genealogy as a 'gateway' resource for adult literacy courses.
- 4.4 That consideration is afforded to the inclusion of '**Genealogy in the Classroom**' in any policy document, strategy or plan aimed at promoting an awareness, appreciation and knowledge of our genealogical heritage at national level.

5. COMMERCIAL GENEALOGY AND RESEARCH STANDARDS

The growth in the popularity of genealogy over the past twenty years or so has been matched by an equally strong growth in the number of individuals and companies providing professional genealogical research services in Ireland.

The majority of the individuals involved in commercial genealogy in Ireland are members of the **Association of Professional Genealogists in Ireland** (APGI) which provides accreditation for its members and sets standards for their provision of services to clients. Other professional genealogists operating in Ireland are either independent researchers or members of AUGRA (Association of Ulster Genealogists and Record Agents) or the US based APG (Association of Professional Genealogists).

There are a number of companies engaged in commercial genealogical research, some of which concentrate on probate research. In addition, a number of the Heritage Centres around the country undertake commercial research assignments for clients at home and overseas.

The potential for the creation of more sustainable employment opportunities in this sector may require a much higher level of specialisation as greater public accessibility to on-line records creates a very challenging competitive environment for the generalist.

Research standards in Ireland are generally considered to be consistently high however, not all genealogists engaged in commercial research have an academic or recognised professional qualification in genealogy or in a related subject. Likewise many more members of genealogical societies have such qualifications and do not undertake commercial research assignments.

In line with the growing public interest in genealogy the number of educational institutions offering courses in genealogy has greatly increased over the years. These courses range from beginner courses introducing students to the world of genealogy to the more academic and modular type courses like those provided by the Adult Education Centre at University College Dublin. Some courses provide recognised diplomas on the successful completion of an examination and course work, others provide certificates of completion.

Therefore, persons engaged in commercial genealogy may have widely differing levels of training and competence based on the range of courses and accreditations available. This situation should be of concern to all engaged in commercial genealogy as may impact on the professionalism and reputation of this sector.

The maintenance of the consistently high standard of professionalism, customer care and the quality of research data provided to clients by genealogists involved in commercial research assignments in Ireland is of paramount importance to the image and reputation of Irish genealogical services and therefore, as all such providers are not members of one professional body, universal standards and registration should be considered.

In the *Genealogy & Heraldry Bill, 2006*, the Society proposed (Section 35) that provision is made for the training of persons in all aspects of genealogical research in conjunction with a third level educational institution and that provision is made for the certification of persons successfully completing such training as qualified genealogical researchers. Also, in recognition of organisations like APGI and others, that provision is made for persons taking other certified courses in genealogical research provided by persons, bodies corporate or institutions which would be acceptable for certification as persons qualified to undertake genealogical research.

• **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 That consideration is afforded to the establishment, in consultation with the commercial genealogy sector, of a publicly accessible central register of all those engaged in commercial genealogical research containing the researcher's name, address and, where appropriate, a trading name or corporate body; qualifications; membership of professional bodies; areas of research or specialisations; and that a certificate of registration be issued indicating the acceptance of a code of ethics and the maintenance of research standards.
- 5.2 As such a registration mechanism could be a very valuable marketing asset for Irish genealogical research service providers it is recommended that it be a self financing system based on an annual administration fee charged for certification.
- 5.3 That consideration is afforded to the establishment, in consultation with the various educational institutions, of an agreed core curriculum and minimum standards for the provision of genealogy courses and the designation of such courses as 'recognised courses'.
- 5.4 That all professional bodies in the State providing accreditation to their members undertaking commercial genealogical research assignments for the public should, in the interest of openness, transparency and accountability, be incorporated under the Companies Acts, publish annual reports and provide audited financial accounts to the Companies Registration Office.

6. GENEALOGICAL RESOURCES –NATIONAL REPOSITORIES

For the purpose of this chapter the term '*national repositories*' include the National Cultural Institutions, General Register Office, Registry of Deeds, Valuation Office, Universities, State Agencies, Semi-State bodies and other such national institutions holding archival collections that are either directly under ministerial responsibility or are in receipt of State funding.

The level of service provided by the majority of the national repositories to genealogical researchers is of an exceptionally high standard both in the direct service provision and in the customer care remit. However, problems do exist, most notably at the **General Register Office (GRO)**, where the relationship with genealogists has been problematic, to say the least, for the past quarter century. Without dwelling on the problems at the GRO, many of which, have been exacerbated by unreasonable attitudes on both sides, the main issue is one of an inability to accept that facilitating genealogical research is one of the core functions of the General Register Office.

In 1997, understanding that the stated problems with the GRO were ones of 'core function' and a 'limited capacity' to facilitate genealogical research, the Society proposed that all records over 70 years be designated as '**historic records**' and that microfilm copies of the indexes and the registers be made freely available to the public at the National Library and the National Archives. This proposal was expanded in 2000, in recognition of the Belfast Agreements of 1998, to include regional repositories around the State and in Northern Ireland. This proposal, if it had been adopted, would have freed-up the staff at the GRO to concentrate on what it considered its core functions.

In the interim with the wonderful success of the on-line accessibility to the Census Returns for 1901 and 1911; the creation and expansion of the Government's **Genealogy Portal** – www.irishgenealogy.ie – and the continued expansion of the ranges of resources now available, free of charge, on the websites of the National Archives, National Library and the Military Archives, an opportunity now exists to reconsider the Society's 1997 proposals on the records of the General Register Office, albeit now as digitised resources on the Government's Genealogy Portal.

In order to 'plan for the capture of the full value of our genealogical heritage' it is essential that we have a comprehensive understanding of the range, scope and location of the archival records which provide the research material for 'our genealogical heritage'. Back in 2006 in the *Genealogy & Heraldry Bill*, the Society's proposed the establishment and maintenance of a **National Inventory of Genealogical Records** which would be created and made accessible to the public on-line.

The function of maintaining this important inventory would be assigned, it was proposed, to a member of the staff of the National Library of Ireland who would liaise with departments of state, state agencies, universities, institutions, libraries, archives and other such places of deposit or custody of genealogical records or '*records of a genealogical potential*' in order to create a central database of such records.

The concept of '*records of a genealogical potential*' was adapted from a similar methodology employed in archaeology, however, specific guidelines and assessment procedures would have to be formulated to ensure that all such records are protected.

This National Inventory of Genealogical Records would have created a new resource for the study of genealogy, history and related subjects; heightened the awareness amongst the various custodians of archival records of the importance of records of a genealogical potential; established a mechanism by which the location, ownership, condition, standard of care and preservation, and vulnerability of these important national archival treasures could be monitored; and to prevent, where possible, their removal from the State.

The National Inventory of Genealogical Records could also be developed in a manner so as to facilitate the participation by the public in the recording of the existence of genealogical records, records of a genealogical potential, publications, articles or studies of a genealogical interest, and a digital photographic record of monumental inscriptions of Irish interest from around the world. This would be a very proactive method of engaging with the Irish diaspora in the collection and preservation of the recorded or archival history of the Irish around the globe.

Whilst a number of legislative measures would greatly improve the scope and delivery of genealogical services by the State – **see chapter 16** – the proposal to amalgamate the National Library and the National Archives was a seriously flawed initiative which, when abandoned last year by the Government, was replaced by another fundamentally unsound proposal to abolish the Board of the National Library and to reincorporate its governance within the department.

At the height of the controversy surrounding the amalgamation proposal in 2010, the Society suggested that any amalgamation of the National Archives and the National Library should be confined to a '*legislative amalgamation*' whereby the separate identities, functions and roles of each institution would be protected. The Society argued that an opportunity now exists to review, update and amend the *National Archives Act, 1986* and the *National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997*, and to create a completely new legislative structure under a *National Cultural and Archival Institutions Act* which would be equipped to deal with a rapidly growing and expanding digital environment. This matter is discussed in more detail in chapter 16 along with legislative measures covering other institutions.

However, the funding resources allocated to of our National Cultural Institutions remains of considerable concern, for example, there are circa 70,000 boxes of archival documents at the National Archives that remain to be catalogued creating a serious backlog that may interfere with its statutory obligations under the *National Archives Act, 1986*, whilst at the National Library a number of projects are on hold due to funding restraints. The importance of plans aimed at sourcing of philanthropic funding to alleviate the current problems is obvious. [see: chapter 15 below]

• **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1. In order to 'plan for the capture of the full value of our genealogical heritage' it is essential that we have a comprehensive understanding of the range, scope and location of the archival records which provide the research material for 'our genealogical heritage'. Therefore, it is recommended that consideration is afforded to the establishment of a ***National Inventory of Genealogical Records***, in which, the location, ownership, condition, standard of care and preservation, and vulnerability of records of a genealogical potential and whereby these important national archival treasures could be monitored and, where possible, to prevent their removal from the State.
- 6.2. That consideration is afforded to the appointment of a **Chief State Genealogical Officer**, initially seconded from the staff of the National Archives or the National Library, to liaise with record holders; to establish a National Inventory of Genealogical Records and to produce guidelines as to its function, scope and use by the record holders and others.
- 6.3. Develop an on-line facility under the direction of the Chief State Genealogical Officer for the collection of information on genealogical records relating to the Irish abroad including a facility to receive digitised photographs, including of monumental inscriptions, of Irish interest from around the world.

- 6.4. That in conjunction with the Archives and Records Association, The Records Management Society, The Irish Society for Archives and the Archives Department of University College Dublin, that an on-going risk assessment procedure be established to monitor the care and custody of our genealogical and heraldic archival heritage.
- 6.5. That the Chief State Genealogical Officer be ex-officio a member of the **Council of National Cultural Institutions** and of any interdepartmental group dealing with records of a genealogical potential.
- 6.6. That consideration is afforded to the production and implementation of an integrated service delivery plan in respect of the provision of genealogical services by State institutions which would include appropriate training for frontline staff to facilitate an understanding of the needs of genealogical researchers, both beginners and professional genealogists, and the importance of this sector to vital areas of our economy such as tourism.
- 6.7. That consideration is afforded to the establishment of a study by the Chief State Solicitor's Office or by the Office of the Attorney General to discover what legal impediments, if any, exist preventing the provision of full public access to the records of the **Irish Land Commission** and to set forth what legislative measures, if any, that may be required to allow these valuable records of enormous genealogical potential to be accessed at the National Archives of Ireland.
- 6.8. That consideration is afforded to the establishment of an ***Irish Ancestral Heritage Fund*** to attract philanthropic donations or bequests from home and abroad for the acquisition, collection, preservation, conservation and digitisation of archival records of a genealogical potential and for the provision of access to such on-line, free of charge, to the public via the Government's Genealogy Portal.
- 6.9. That the remit of the **Council of National Cultural Institutions** (CNCI), which is a statutory body established under the Heritage Fund, be expanded to specifically include the digitisation of our archival heritage and to make recommendations to the Minister on the acquisition of important collections in private hands using the ***Heritage Fund Act, 2001***.
- 6.10. That the ***National Archives Act, 1986*** and the ***National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997*** be updated in a new and comprehensive ***National Cultural & Archival Institutions Bill*** – see chapter 16.

7. GENEALOGICAL RESOURCES – PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS

For the purpose of this chapter the term '***private institutions***' is defined as all such bodies, whether they are incorporated, voluntary, commercial or charitable organisations, that are not directly under ministerial responsibility irrespective of whether such institutions or organisations are or were in receipt of State or Local Authority funding.

The major private institutions within the State holding genealogical records or records of a genealogical potential are the various religious bodies, schools

and colleges, sporting organisations and a number of corporate bodies such as Guinness.

Whilst most of the records of the religious bodies, records of baptisms, marriages and burials, have been microfilmed and are available to the public through the national cultural institutions and increasingly on-line at the Government's Genealogy Portal, computerised records are held by the county Heritage Centres – members of the **Irish Family History Foundation**.

The Heritage Centres were established during the 1980s as part of the Irish Genealogical Project (IGP) which was a nationwide community employment and training programme to provide jobseekers with computer skills. Details of baptisms, marriages and burials from the local parish registers were transcribed onto index cards and later entered into a computer database. The centres were fully funded by the State including staff costs, training, office and computer equipment, utilities and services. They were managed by local companies established for that purpose with, initially at least, voluntary boards of directors.

During the first half of the 1990s concern was expressed about the slow pace of the computerisation and following a very critical report in 1996 by the Comptroller and Auditor General into the operation of the Irish Genealogical Project (IGP), a new company, Irish Genealogy Limited (IGL), was established to promote and coordinate the marketing of the centres. During the Celtic Tiger years the numbers of trainees available plummeted and many centres were forced to close or to rely on purely voluntary staff to operate their services, others were absorbed by the local authorities.

The IFHF withdrew from IGL which soon after was dissolved. The IFHF continued to coordinate and to develop the services of the IGP heritage centres and eventually established a central 'pay-for-view' facility rootsireland.ie. During the 1990s questions arose as to the legal ownership of the databases compiled by the IGP, especially, since this work was largely funded by the taxpayer. Therefore, if we consider genealogy is a 'national resource' the careful re-examination of this issue in view of the enormous economic and cultural potential of the 'free-to-view' websites is essential.

The recommendations contained in chapter 6 in respect of the establishment of a ***National Inventory of Genealogical Records*** are particularly important in relation to the records held by private institutions. Although the Society was successful in achieving the inclusion of restrictions on the export of important genealogical records in the *National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997*, without a *National Inventory of Genealogical Records* this measure on the prohibition of exportation is extremely difficult to implement. See Section 49 of the *National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997* as follows:

(2) The Minister may by order declare any document, which is in his or her opinion of national, historical, genealogical or literary interest, to be an article to which this Part applies.

(15) In this section "document" includes "estate records, parish and school registers, burial and cemetery records and maps".

The Society, as a private institution with charitable status, has an important collection of genealogical records including a substantial manuscript collection, school registers and roll books, records of social clubs and donated family papers. The members and friends of the Society are

encouraged to lodge their family history records and papers with the Society's Archives and Research Centre in order, not only to preserve these records for future generations of genealogical researchers, but more importantly to keep them in Ireland.

• **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1. In order to 'plan for the capture of the full value of our genealogical heritage' it is essential that we have a comprehensive understanding of the range, scope and location of the archival records of a genealogical potential held by private institutions in Ireland. Therefore, it is recommended that, in conjunction with the Archives and Records Association, The Records Management Society, The Irish Society for Archives and the Archives Department of University College Dublin, that a mechanism is urgently established for the surveying and documenting of these records for inclusion on a National Inventory of Genealogical Records.
- 7.2. That consideration is afforded to the possibility of the incorporation of the Heritage Centre network and its employees within the Public Library Service in each local authority area and that the legal ownership of the computerised records held by these centres be clarified and firmly vested in the State. This will ensure the maintenance and long-term viability of the services of the Heritage Centres into the future and secure the employment of the staff in each centre, thus allaying the fears expressed by the IFHF at the September 2011 seminar held at the National Library.
- 7.3. That, in conjunction with the Archives and Records Association, The Records Management Society, The Irish Society for Archives and the Archives Department of University College Dublin, a listing is compiled of the important collections held by private institutions which are at risk of deterioration and for the possible acquisition of such collections by the State for conservation and digitisation.
- 7.4. That consideration is afforded to the use of the Public Library Service in each local authority area to promote an awareness, appreciation and knowledge amongst the private institutions with archival collections in their area of the importance of protecting our archival heritage, including records of a genealogical potential, and that a national mechanism is established, in conjunction with the National Archives and National Library, for the documenting of such collections at a local level.
- 7.5. That consideration is afforded to requesting the **Minister for Education and Science** to establish a nationwide audit of the primary and secondary schools in the State to ascertain the location, condition and years covered of **School Registers and School Roll Books** in the custody of these schools and colleges.
- 7.6. That consideration is afforded to requesting the **Law Society of Ireland** and the **Bar Council of Ireland** to encourage their members to lodge with the **National Archives** any archival records held by them that are either no longer required for client business or are intended for disposal. Both organisations should advise members to

contact the National Archives before disposing of old archival records whether by sale or destruction.

- 7.7. That consideration is afforded to requesting IBEC and ISME to encourage their members to lodge with the **National Archives** any archival records held by them that are either no longer required for their businesses or are intended for disposal. Both organisations should advise members to contact the National Archives before disposing of old archival records whether by sale or destruction. Business archival records are of enormous importance to the economic, social and employment history of Ireland and therefore, should be considered as records of a genealogical potential.
- 7.8. That consideration is afforded to the acquisition, ideally through philanthropy, of digitised copies of estate records and records of a genealogical potential relating to Ireland held by institutions outside the State and that are assessed to be of exceptional value to our genealogical heritage.

8. GENETIC GENEALOGY

Genetic genealogy or genealogy based on DNA analysis is a relatively new phenomenon in the world of popular genealogical research. Indeed, much has been written about the potential of 'genetic genealogy' to unlock the seemingly intractable problems caused by deficiencies or gaps in the archival records.

The 'genetic genealogy' phenomenon grew rapidly since the publication of *'The Seven Daughters of Eve'* in 2001 by Brian Sykes, a molecular biologist at Oxford University who described in an easily accessible manner the significance and potential of the discovery of the major haplogroups of our European ancestors. His methodologies also advanced surname DNA studies which became popular amongst One-Name Study groups and Clan Associations around the world.

As accessing the testing technology became more affordable the number of companies offering 'genetic genealogy' increased and by 2012 the estimated total revenue generated by the DNA and DNA Forensic Laboratories, according to a market research report by IBISWorld published in November 2012, was circa \$2bn with, no doubt, a sizeable proportion generated by 'popular' genetic genealogy.

In 2005, the National Geographic Society in the US and IBM, in partnership with the University of Arizona and FamilyTreeDNA, launched the **'Genographic Project'** as an anthropological study which, by 2013, collected DNA samples from around 600,000 people worldwide. The project is a privately funded not-for-profit collaboration involving the Waitt Foundation. The success of this project has popularised the genetic genealogy throughout the world.

A number of companies in Ireland are offering **DNA Profiling** as a genealogical service providing clients with an analysis of their DNA markers which points to genetic origins based on similarities with many hundreds of thousands of DNA samples collected from around the globe. This type of DNA analysis indicates geographic locations of origin, however, some have taken such to mean origins amongst historic population groups e.g. Celts, Vikings, Picts or Anglo-Saxons.

Although the scientific data may indicate, quite conclusively, that the genetic origins of a client are similar to those of others tested with connections to particular regions, the nomenclature used to describe persons from these regions in pre-historic or early medieval times is frequently disputed as mere 'general speculation' by academic historians specialising in ancient or medieval history. This is evidenced by the long-running academic debate on the 'Celtic question' – Who were the Celts? What, besides language, is 'Celtic'?

In Ireland studies have been conducted into questions of whether similar or identical surnames have a common genetic origin or several genetic origins. In a number of cases the results have confirmed the genealogical 'founding narratives' as presented by the annals. These discoveries or, as some would suggest, confirmations, are of particular interest to the **Clans of Ireland** movement and to those involved in what is termed '**reverse genealogy**' as the more specific documented ancestral links to a place of origin may be nonexistent. Undoubtedly, this type of DNA analysis has a tourism potential.

In order to understand developments in this area, a clear distinction must be drawn between '**popular**' and '**academic**' genetic genealogy. Popular genetic genealogy involves the collection and scientific analysis of DNA samples to primarily provide the client with his/her DNA profile and, in most cases, to suggest likely origins as outlined above.

Academic genetic genealogical studies concentrate on specific population groups originating in particular areas. Such studies seek to resolve various questions as to origin, movement, distribution, immigration, intermarriage and, in some cases, to explore health issues or genetic characteristics. Participants in such studies are required to meet definitive and verifiable criteria, including the provision of a properly researched genealogical chart.

The Society launched such an academic genetic genealogy project in 2011 in conjunction with Dr. Gianpiero Cavalleri of the **Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland** (RCSI) as Scientific Director, **Séamus O'Reilly**, FGSi, as Genealogical Director and **Dr. Darren McGettigan**, a specialist in early and medieval Irish history, as the project's Historical Director.

The aims of the **Irish DNA Atlas Project** are twofold, genetic genealogy and health research and involve the collection of DNA samples from individuals who can verifiably trace their eight great-grandparents to the same general area or '**NASC**' – natural area of social cohesion which could cross county boundaries.

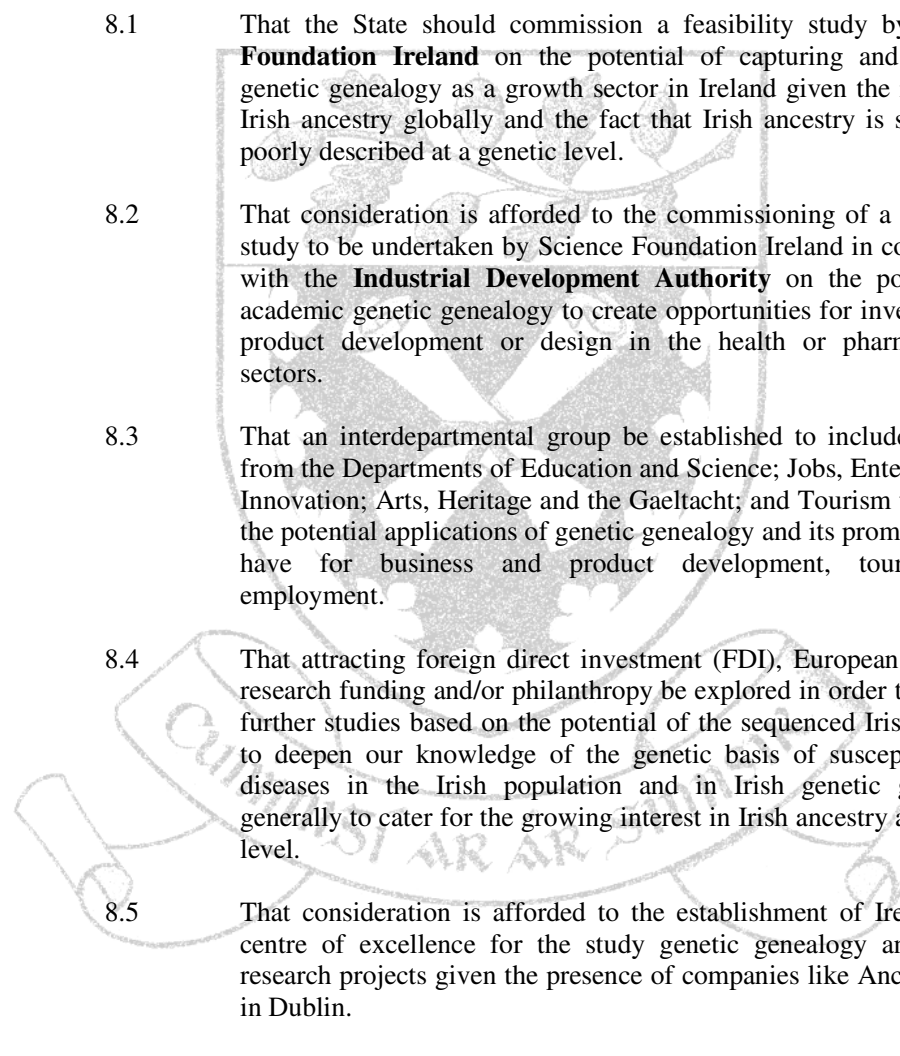
A greater understanding human genetic variation in the Irish population is required for two principal purposes: (1) to further our knowledge of the population history of Ireland and its connections with other populations in Europe and (2) to help us understand how genes influence health in Ireland through the creation of a resource for use as 'healthy' controls in researching how genes influence common diseases in Ireland, including (though, not confined to) diabetes, heart disease and cancer.

Through the scientific analysis of data it may be possible to identify genetic risk factors for disease and with this information, improve the nature of future treatments, including drug design or indeed lifestyle decisions on how to prevent the development of disease in the first place. As the Royal College of Surgeons is one of Ireland's foremost research institutions, this project has

both a national and an international dimension involving researchers in a number of different fields. The project will provide valuable information on the migration and settlement patterns across the island of Ireland. This research will assist historians and archaeologists in their analysis of existing records and studies.

Genetic genealogy has the potential to provide opportunities for the development of research services which offer a sustainable engagement with our diaspora through collaborative ventures with Irish and/or international DNA laboratories and, in some cases, with health services providers.

• **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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- 8.1 That the State should commission a feasibility study by **Science Foundation Ireland** on the potential of capturing and realizing genetic genealogy as a growth sector in Ireland given the interest in Irish ancestry globally and the fact that Irish ancestry is still rather poorly described at a genetic level.
 - 8.2 That consideration is afforded to the commissioning of a feasibility study to be undertaken by Science Foundation Ireland in conjunction with the **Industrial Development Authority** on the potential of academic genetic genealogy to create opportunities for investment in product development or design in the health or pharmaceutical sectors.
 - 8.3 That an interdepartmental group be established to include officials from the Departments of Education and Science; Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation; Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; and Tourism to explore the potential applications of genetic genealogy and its promotion may have for business and product development, tourism and employment.
 - 8.4 That attracting foreign direct investment (FDI), European scientific research funding and/or philanthropy be explored in order to develop further studies based on the potential of the sequenced Irish genome to deepen our knowledge of the genetic basis of susceptibility to diseases in the Irish population and in Irish genetic genealogy generally to cater for the growing interest in Irish ancestry at a global level.
 - 8.5 That consideration is afforded to the establishment of Ireland as a centre of excellence for the study genetic genealogy and related research projects given the presence of companies like Ancestry.com in Dublin.

9. GENEALOGY AND DIASPORA STUDIES

The importance of diaspora studies has only recently been fully appreciated in Ireland through the pioneering work undertaken a number of institutions, including University College Cork with its Migration and Diaspora Studies; the **Mellon Centre for Migration Studies** at Omagh, Co. Tyrone and the **John Hume Institute for Global Irish Studies** at University College Dublin which hosts an annual Irish Diaspora Forum, bringing together academics, politicians, policy makers and opinion formers from around the world who identify themselves in some way with Ireland and with Irishness.

A growing number of third level institutions around the world include diaspora and migration studies as components of wider Irish Studies programmes. The link between diaspora studies and genealogy is clear and in order to cater for this growing interest, the Society has produced an innovative and exciting proposal based on its long-held objective to establish an *Irish Institute for Genealogical & Heraldic Studies*. This proposal has been developed from three earlier documents produced in 1994, 2006 and 2011.

Over the past twenty three years the Society has amassed a considerable expertise in the provision of research training through workshops, group discussions and projects, lectures and visits to repositories. Since 2011 the Society, in conjunction with **Ancestor Network Ltd.**, has provided classes at the facility at the Carlisle Pier. It is intended to expand on these classes to possibly include a Summer School.

The Society's proposal for the establishment of an *'Irish Institute of Genealogical & Heraldic Studies'* which incorporates a *'Centre for Diaspora & Migration Studies'* has enormous potential for the creation and maintenance of a new cultural, heritage and educational facility in Ireland.

It is envisaged that this facility would provide a range of services to the public and to visitors to Ireland. These services range from the provision of information to visitors on ancestry research to the provision of accredited courses and on-going academic research into genealogical, heraldic, vexillological, social history, migration and diaspora studies.

The facility would be an important cultural, heritage, educational and tourism asset for the Dublin region and for Ireland as it would be a unique establishment providing specialised and innovative services to a world class standard. The Society's proposal is ambitious and farseeing in its objectives as the growth areas in tourism, for example, are essentially those related to culture, heritage and ancestry. The proposal aims to meet the service requirements of this sector and to simultaneously provide training and research opportunities for those seeking employment in the sector.

The provision of diaspora and migration studies as part of this proposal recognises the unique opportunities afforded by location, in Dublin and in easy reach of the main repositories, and specialisation allowing for the facility to become a leader in this field in Ireland and linked throughout the world with similar centres of excellence.

A number of locations throughout Ireland are vying to be chosen as the site for the development a **National Diaspora Centre**, however, given its proximity to Dublin and its unique association with emigration from the *'Pier of Tears'* that, in the opinion of the Society, **Dún Laoghaire Harbour** offers the best possible location for such an important national cultural, heritage and educational asset.

- **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1. That consideration is afforded to the inclusion of diaspora and migration studies in any public policy initiatives or frameworks aimed at promoting an awareness, appreciation and knowledge of our genealogical heritage at home and overseas.

- 9.2. That consideration is afforded to the establishment, through philanthropy, of an **Irish Global Diaspora and Migration Studies** branch of the National Library of Ireland to acquire and receive copies of publications and research papers, including genealogical research, on the Irish overseas and the development and expansion of our diaspora.
- 9.3. That consideration is afforded to the establishment of an annual award, possibly presented by a revised Seanad Éireann, for the most significant contribution to our understanding of the achievements, experiences, development and expansion of the global Irish diaspora published or produced or created in the previous year by persons under thirty years of age around the world. This '**Senatorial Global Irish Diaspora Award**' would recognise excellence and achievement in the areas of literature, research, film and the arts.
- 9.4. That consideration is afforded to the inclusion in the report of the proceedings of this Oireachtas Joint Committee support for the plans by the Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company to create a world-class **Irish International Diaspora Centre**, in which, culture, technology and entertainment will combine in celebration and commemoration of the achievements and experiences of the 70 million members of the Irish Diaspora. [see www.dlharbour.ie]

10. GENEALOGY AND LOCAL STUDIES

Most genealogists want to go beyond the creation of a simple family tree to open up an understanding, appreciation and knowledge of the lives and times of our ancestors. Inevitably this brings us to the study of local and social histories concerning the places of origin and occupations of our families in times past. The origin and meaning of our placenames is of particular importance to local studies and especially so to clan or sept histories.

Unfortunately accessing a huge range of locally produced publications is fraught with difficulty due to short print runs of privately published local or parish histories, many of which, for whatever reasons, are not found on the shelves of national or regional repositories. Though, a lot of work by County Librarians throughout Ireland is slowly addressing this major gap in our collections. Understanding their importance, the National Library of Ireland has also sought to obtain copies of these privately produced 'gems' of local community knowledge, history and lore.

However, over the years genealogists and local historians throughout Ireland have benefited greatly from the enormous amount of research undertaken by the staff and students at the History Department of NUI, Maynooth. This research is published as the '*Maynooth Studies in Local History*' series edited by Professor Raymond Gillespie and published by Four Courts Press, Ireland's premier academic publisher in the field.

Most of the research is based on the work of students undertaking the MA in Local History. Describing the publications in this series, Prof. Gillespie stresses that they are not 'a simple chronicling of events relating to an area within administrative or geographically determined boundaries since understanding the local world presents much more complex challenges for the historian. It is a reconstruction of the socially diverse worlds of poor and

rich as well as those who took different positions on the political issues that preoccupied the local societies in Ireland’.

With over 100 titles now in this series, this is a wealth of local history information, undoubtedly accessed by many local organising committees of ‘*The Gathering*’ throughout the country. Local graveyards were cleaned, surveyed and memorials recorded, school and church registers consulted and, in time, new local histories will be written, very often with exciting and original research material. All of this community effort has a legacy potential, inasmuch as, these local publications may contribute significantly to our knowledge and understanding of the history, genealogy and folklore of the areas concerned. This type of research is of exceptional importance to the family historian who seeks a greater understanding of the conditions and events that impacted on the lives of our ancestors and their communities.

The Public Library Service throughout the country has been central to the development of local history sections within its regional libraries and to the forefront in the collection of local history publications, newspaper clippings, maps and photographs. The County Libraries in a number of counties have also digitised locally sourced material ranging from burial records, land records, memorial inscriptions and, in some cases, biographies of local people of note. This is an enormous contribution to the on-line resources for genealogical as well as local history research.

• **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1. That consideration is afforded to the utilisation of the County Steering Groups established to promote ‘*The Gathering*’ to ensure that copies of any publications by local groups are lodged with the National Library and with their County Library. As the National Library’s holdings constitute the most comprehensive collection of Irish documentary material in the world, the opportunity afforded by ‘*The Gathering*’ to add to this collection must be promoted by the National Library, the national organisers of *The Gathering Ireland* and the County Steering Groups throughout Ireland. Expanding our national collections would be a wonderful legacy of *The Gathering*.
- 10.2. That consideration is afforded, in consultation with the **Royal Irish Academy**, to the creation of county based biographical projects to aimed at researching and recording the lives and times of local individuals or their descendants who made contributions to the arts, sciences, education, industry, political or social history, agricultural development or had a military, maritime or religious career in the county or overseas. This project would not seek to duplicate the RIA’s ‘*Dictionary of Irish Biography Project*’ but augment it with new local information presented as a publicly accessible on-line resource which would be of enormous benefit to genealogical and local history research. It could also attract visitors with an interest in these individuals to the locality irrespective of whether they themselves had any ancestral connections to the area.
- 10.3. That consideration is afforded to the inclusion of an indexation project for the **Maynooth Local History Studies Series** in any proposals seeking philanthropic funding aimed at making our genealogical heritage more accessible to the general public.

11. GENEALOGY AND ETHNIC OR CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The Genealogical Society of Ireland has been very conscious of the need for inclusivity in the promotion of genealogy in Ireland. Indeed, as its name suggests, it is not the '*Irish Genealogical Society*' which could unwittingly and unintentionally convey a message of exclusivity to the hundreds of thousand of Irish residents who have a non-Irish ancestry.

In recognition of the emergence of a new multiethnic and culturally diverse Ireland, the Society was the first genealogical organisation in Ireland to adopt a **Social Inclusion Policy** back in 2003. This development was welcomed by the **Equality Authority of Ireland**. In its commitment to the advancement of socially inclusive policies and activities, the Society was anxious to reach out to the '**New Irish**' and was, for example, the first to publish articles on genealogy in Polish.

When we speak of our genealogical heritage in the Ireland of the twenty-first century, it is important to emphasise that each and every person, irrespective of race, creed, ethnicity, nationality or social background shares in that heritage and is aware of their equal and valued ownership of that genealogical heritage.

The front cover of this document features a photograph of the Society's Vice President, Stuart Rosenblatt, PC, FGSI, who has located, copied and collated the archival heritage of the **Irish Jewish community** stretching over 300 years and presented this wonderful genealogical resource in seventeen large bound volumes to the National Library, National Archives and the Archives & Research Centre of the Genealogical Society of Ireland. This resource is of importance internationally as such a project has not been completed anywhere else and indeed, it encourages the many thousands of our Irish Jewish diaspora to reconnect with Ireland. The methodology employed by Mr. Rosenblatt could easily be applied to the archival heritage of other minority groups in the State.

The growing interest in **DNA markers**, as an aspect of modern genealogical research, emphasises 'blood ties' to nations, regions, ethnic groups and, in some cases, to clans or septs. Whilst, commissioning such DNA research may be merely of a curiosity value for most people, policymakers should be cognisant of the need for the formulation of a balanced and inclusive policy framework for any promotion of genealogy based on DNA analysis.

Academics may differ on whether the **Irish Traveller Community** meets the criteria necessary for its recognition as an 'ethnic group' and some may argue that even if the Traveller Community did meet the academic criteria, lawyers may find constitutional difficulties in the provision of a legislative recognition of an indigenous ethnic status. However, none of this should prevent or hinder the due recognition of the unique identity and distinct heritage of the Traveller Community in the provision and promotion of genealogical services by the State or its agencies.

• RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1. That legislative or public policy measures dealing with our genealogical heritage be 'proofed' to ensure that they emphasise the

inclusivity of that heritage embracing all living on the island of Ireland irrespective of background, ethnicity or nationality.

- 11.2. That special care be taken to ensure that the promotion of 'genetic genealogy' (genealogy based on DNA analysis) by the State or by State Agencies is not misconstrued so as to unwittingly advance the notion of an 'ethnocentric' Irish genealogical heritage to the potential exclusion of Irish residents with ancestral links to other regions of the world.
- 11.3. That any programmes developed for the promotion of our genealogical heritage within the primary or secondary education system be structured in a manner that values and embraces diversity in our genealogical heritage by emphasising the multiethnic and multicultural nature of that heritage.
- 11.4. That in the formulation and planning of genealogical policies or services, that a meaningful consultation process involving representatives of the **Irish Traveller Communities** in Ireland and overseas is proactively pursued in order to ensure that this unique aspect of our genealogical heritage is properly represented and adequately resourced to encourage and sustain the community's participation in the promotion of an awareness, appreciation and knowledge of Irish Traveller Genealogy at home and amongst the Irish Traveller diaspora.
- 11.5. That in the formulation and planning of genealogical policies or services, that a meaningful consultation process involving representatives of **The Integration Centre** is proactively pursued in order to ensure that such initiatives are effectively 'inclusivity proofed'. The Integration Centre is committed to the integration and inclusion of people from immigrant backgrounds in Ireland. The centre specializes in integration planning, monitoring and advocacy at city, local, national and international levels. The Integration Centre more than 250 affiliated organisations in its network.

12. HERALDRY AND VEXILLOLOGY

For the purpose of this chapter the term '**heraldry**' is defined as the study or art of devising and blazoning arms, tracing genealogies associated with the arms. It also deals with the description of armorial bearings (coats-of-arms) and accessories in conventional heraldic terminology.

Likewise for the purpose of this chapter the term '**vexillology**' is defined as the scientific study of the development, history, symbolism, design and proper use of flags and banners. It is a relatively new field of study, once believed to be a branch of heraldry. Now it is a worldwide field of study.

Heraldry and genealogy have been inextricably linked for the best part of a millennium in Europe and since heraldry, as we know it today, arrived in Ireland with the Cambro-Normans in the late twelfth century. Some academics contend that a form of native Gaelic heraldry existed in Ireland prior to the introduction of mainstream European heraldry and, indeed, a native (Gaelic/Celtic) symbolism is very evident in Irish heraldry today.

The conventions surrounding mainstream European heraldry, including that of England and Scotland, place the right to bear arms as hereditary and

therefore, based on the genealogy of the armiger. This convention forms a part of a wider body of rules governing heraldry which is referred to as the '*Law of Arms*' which were largely observed by the Chief Heralds of Ireland from 1943 when the contents of the Office of Arms in Dublin Castle were transferred to Irish control. This heraldic officer known as the *Ulster King of Arms* operated in Dublin by Letters Patent from the Crown from February 1552 to March 31st 1943.

The contents of the Office of Arms, which was renamed the **Genealogical Office** in 1943, include genealogical records and heraldic material dating back to its establishment in 1552. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century many, mostly wealthy, members of the Irish diaspora sought grants of arms from the Ulster King of Arms as the herald with jurisdiction for the entire island of Ireland. Indeed, it was this interest from overseas and its revenue stream that encouraged the Irish government to agree to a request by Edward MacLysaght, first **Chief Herald of Ireland**, to continue the practice of granting arms. The manner in which this was commenced was later to prove problematic – see chapter 16.

According to Susan Hood in '*Royal Roots Republican Inheritance – The Survival of the Office of Arms*' (Dublin 2002), MacLysaght introduced a number of 'innovative practices' aimed at reviving an interest in Gaelic heraldry "recognising the traditional arms used by Gaelic families of antiquity before the foundation of the Office of Ulster King of Arms in 1552". His 'innovative practices' were to introduce heraldry to a much wider public by the invention of the controversial concept of sept or clan arms. This was designed to allow anybody of a particular surname to display 'without impropriety' the arms associated with that clan or sept.

These new clan/sept arms provided an instantly recognisable tentative visual link to a wider kinship group and to an ancient Irish ancestry identity. According to Hood, 'thousands of such illustrations were executed by the heraldic artists during the later 1940s and 1950s, and purchased in large quantities by visitors to the Heraldic Museum'. A new heraldic industry was born which now spans the globe with its heraldic products displayed in homes, on businesses and in Irish pubs everywhere.

The industry founded by MacLysaght created important symbols of Irish identity for many of Irish ancestry at home and across the world. These heraldic products are now manufactured by enterprises located in many countries with little or no association with Ireland and certainly none with the 'office' of the Chief Herald of Ireland. Designs are copied, materials sourced abroad, employment and profits remaining overseas, all generated by an Irish heraldic product in name only. These clan/sept arms are also displayed on flags and banners in the same way as the County Arms are displayed on GAA flags and banners – this is the vexillological aspect of the heraldic product.

Clearly the concept created by MacLysaght and the products developed over the years emanating from his introduction of clan/sept arms, including coats-of-arms and family/clan flags, must be seen as 'gateway products' from which an interest in Irish genealogy later evolves amongst our diaspora. In short – got the T-Shirt with the coat-of-arms, now wonder where the folks came from.

The Society sought through its *Genealogy & Heraldry Bill, 2006*, to repatriate this heraldic industry by the creation of authentic Irish heraldic products which would have employment potential in a number of areas

including, heraldic consultation; genealogical research; heraldic design and painting; calligraphy; manufacture of various products displaying the authentic Irish coats-of-arms and, of course, the spin off for the tourism sector resulting from an increased interest in Irish ancestry.

The development of clan/sept arms over the past sixty years or so may not please heraldic purists, nevertheless as part of our heraldic and vexillological heritage they are here to remain and possibly grow in popularity alongside and complementing our genealogical heritage. Therefore, in seeking plans to 'capture the full value' of our genealogical heritage, it is important to include 'gateway products' like heraldry and vexillology. This is especially important in the promotion of significant heritage tourism events such as Clan Rallies and family gatherings as evidenced by such successful events held during *The Gathering Ireland* by the **Clans of Ireland** and local community groups.

Heraldic symbolism is widely used in Ireland from school and college crests to sporting clubs and other organisations to municipal or civic heraldry. Indeed, these coats-of-arms are also displayed on flags and banners at sporting events throughout Ireland promoting pride in locality, an awareness of tradition and a respect for heritage.

Following the success of the **Bratacha 2013 – Festival of Flags & Emblems** held in May 2013 in Dún Laoghaire as part of *The Gathering Ireland*, the Society established two new branches – **Heraldry Ireland : Araltas Éireann** and **Vexillology Ireland : Brateolaíocht Éireann** – two cater for this interest and to promote an awareness, appreciation and knowledge of Ireland heraldic and vexillological heritage at home and overseas amongst our diaspora.

• **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 12.1. That consideration is afforded to an examination of the potential of 'gateway products' such as heraldry and vexillology as a means of promoting an interest in Irish genealogy amongst our diaspora through the use of heraldic agents, vexillological agents and outlets selling Irish heritage products around the globe and on-line.
- 12.2. That consideration is afforded to the various legislative measures proposed by the *Genealogy & Heraldry Bill, 2006*, [see chapter 14] aimed at creating, developing and sustaining heraldic and vexillological services in Ireland through the development of affordable, authentic and certified Irish heraldic and vexillological products and thereby, repatriating the design, manufacture and provision of this aspect of our heritage.
- 12.3. That consideration is afforded to the introduction of procedures at the 'office' of the Chief Herald of Ireland to facilitate the registration of 'assumed arms' and the provision of computer generated grants of arms as a measure to make the acquisition of a grant of arms from the Chief Herald of Ireland more affordable.
- 12.4. That consideration is afforded to the possibility of creating an enhanced version of the '**Certificate of Irish Heritage**' product with the inclusion of a computer generated unique and authentic Irish coat-of-arms which would be registered at the 'office' of the Chief Herald of Ireland.

- 12.5. That consideration is afforded to the restoration of the *National Cultural Institutions (Amendment) Bill, 2008*, [see chapter 14] to the Order Paper of Seanad Éireann or to the introduction of these legislative provisions within the planned amendments to the *National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997*.
- 12.6. That consideration is afforded to the potential of heraldry as a means of formally recognising meritorious citizens, members of our diaspora and friends of Ireland overseas through the special granting of coats-of-arms to such persons, possibly as a function of a revised Seanad Éireann, and that consideration is afforded to the various legislative measures proposed by Society in the *Genealogy & Heraldry Bill, 2006* in this regard.

13. ROOTS TOURISM

Once the real hope of many for a vibrant and sustainable tourism industry in Ireland, the phenomena known as ‘ancestry tourism’ has been enormously transformed and expanded by free public access to genealogical records.

Changing trends in tourism globally impacted greatly on Ireland during the recession, however, with the wonderful success of *The Gathering Ireland* initiative which involved almost 5,000 events throughout the country the tourism sector has been presented with a reinvigorated ‘roots tourism’ environment.

The Gathering set out to attract an extra 325,000 additional visitors to Ireland generating circa €170m extra in tourism revenue through the mobilisation of citizens, communities and businesses to work collectively through a structured programme spearheaded by **Fáilte Ireland**. This programme aimed to promote pride in Ireland and to raise the profile and standing of the country internationally and, very importantly, to create a platform for on-going and lasting engagement with Ireland’s diaspora.

According to figures produced by the Central Statistics Office and provided by *The Gathering Ireland*, the initiative produced a **6.4% rise on visitor numbers to Ireland between January and September 2013** which equated to an additional 327,000 visitors on the 2012 figure. A breakdown of these figures regionally provides excellent information on the potential for further growth in ‘roots tourism’ with **North America up 14.7%**, Great Britain up 3.5%, Mainland Europe up 5.1% and the rest of the world up 14.6%. The 26% increase in the air access capacity from the United States with an extra 4,000 seats per week in the peak season undoubtedly contributed to the excellent figures from North America.

In relation to the direct impact on ‘bed nights’ booked in hotels and B+B’s around the country, according to information supplied by *The Gathering Ireland* and based on a *Strategic Marketing Tourism Barometer Survey* taken in September 2013, was that 6 out of 10 hotel owners reported increased business as a result of *The Gathering* and B+B owners said that *The Gathering* was a ‘huge factor in the increase in business’.

The Gathering brought home to many that the promotion of an affinity with locality and community roots is central to the whole concept of a successful and sustainable ‘ancestry tourism’ initiative. In this regard the work coordinated by **Ireland Reaching Out** in local communities across Ireland is of exceptional importance and therefore, needs a long-term strategic development plan which would be adequately resourced to build on the

successes of *The Gathering* and to sustain the engagement between local communities and their diasporas. The concept of ‘**reverse genealogy**’ has huge potential if managed in a sustainable and strategic manner to ensure that it continues to be a ‘people centred’ initiative involving local communities acting together in a mutual celebration of people, place and the past.

Over the past few years, **Fáilte Ireland** has produced exceptionally useful and attractive guides to researching family history in Ireland aimed at encouraging those of Irish ancestry to visit Ireland by introducing them to the existing resources for genealogical research. Initiatives like *The Gathering Ireland* have emphasised the need for the development of a strategic holistic approach to our national genealogical resources. Indeed, vital ‘ancestry tourism’ resources, especially those developed in the 1980s and now under the auspices of the Irish Family History Foundation, need to be fully incorporated into the more secure sustainable development of centrally accessible genealogical resources provided on-line by the State.

In 2011 ‘roots tourism’ achieved an international audience through three high profile visits to Ireland by heads of state with Irish ancestry. **HSH Albert II of Monaco** visited his mother’s ancestral home at Drimurla, Newport, Co. Mayo, where his great grandfather, John Peter Kelly, was born and reared before emigrating to America in 1887 and, of course, **President Barack Obama** visited Moneygall, Co. Offaly, to meet relatives of his maternal great-great-great grandfather, Falmouth Kearney, who likewise emigrated to the US in 1850 at the age of 19.

However, the third and possibly historically and politically most significant visit by a head of state, that of **HM Queen Elizabeth**, did not unfortunately emphasise her Irish ancestry. The queen’s 5th great grandfather on her mother’s side was Richard Colley of **Castle Carbery, Co. Kildare**, who inherited the estate of his cousin, Garret Weisely (Wisely Wesly, later Wellesley) of Dangan, Co. Meath, when he died without issue in 1728. Garret was the queen’s first cousin seven times removed. Richard Colley assumed Garret’s surname by Royal Licence in 1728. It is through this Castle Carbury connection that the queen is the great-great-great grand niece of Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington. So when the royal party visited the National Stud in Co. Kildare, the opportunity to give Her Majesty a chance to do some ‘ancestry tourism’ and view the ruins of Castle Carbery - a 16th century tower-house and the former seat of her Irish ancestors was unfortunately omitted from her itinerary. Maybe on her next visit to Ireland or indeed, on a future visit by her son or grandson or even great grandson that Castle Carbery will be included on the royal itinerary.

Emphasising the extent of the Irish global diaspora by recognising and, where appropriate, celebrating the Irish connections of world leaders and of those others who have made significant contributions to science, arts, culture, education and industry around the world should be viewed as an integral part of strategic ‘roots tourism’ planning. Whilst, having a huge economic potential for the areas of origin of the ancestors of each of these famous individuals, it also provides for considerable media coverage in their adopted lands with excellent exposure for Ireland as a ‘roots tourism’ destination.

The most significant contribution to the development and expansion of ‘roots tourism’ would be the release of the **1926 Census of Ireland**. The release of the census, as with all census returns other than those of 1901 and 1911, is covered by a 100 year closure rule brought in under the *Statistics Act, 1993*.

• **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 13.1. That consideration is afforded to the establishment of a on-going structured engagement between the various stakeholders, including the State and State agencies; City, Town and County Councils; the tourism industry; and the genealogical organisations and community initiatives on the development of an integrated approach to the marketing and servicing of 'ancestry tourism' as a positive legacy of *The Gathering Ireland*.
- 13.2. That consideration is afforded to the commissioning of a feasibility study into the establishment of a **National Genealogy Centre** in Dublin and into the impact, if any, this facility may have on the future development of genealogical services at the National Cultural Institutions.
- 13.3. That consideration is afforded to the commissioning of a feasibility study into the provision of an annual **Irish Ancestry Festival** to be held in October each year in the United States to coincide with '*Family History Month*' which is marked by genealogical societies and local communities across the United States.
- 13.4. That consideration is afforded to the designation of October as '*Family History Month*' in Ireland to coincide with a similar designation in the United States and the hosting of the most significant genealogical event in the Irish calendar, ***Back To Our Past***, at the RDS, Dublin.
- 13.5. That consideration is afforded, in consultation with **An Post** and the **Clans of Ireland** movement, to the exploitation of the marketing and promotion potential of **Special Postage Stamps** depicting the coats-of-arms of the clans and septs of Ireland as a way of celebrating Irish ancestry and the history of Irish surnames. The issuance of a range of such stamps each year would be a sustainable and profitable investment in the promotion of 'roots tourism' as they could be utilised by persons of the surnames depicted to contact relatives overseas and become collectable 'heritage products' for our diaspora.
- 13.6. That consideration is afforded, as a legacy of *The Gathering Ireland*, to the proactive expansion of the various '**Twining Programmes**' by local authorities across the State concentrating on those areas overseas with significant populations of Irish ancestry in Great Britain, North America, Australasia, Argentina and South Africa. The sustainability of such programmes has been greatly enhanced by the advances of web technology facilitating vibrant on-line collaborative community based initiatives, especially in the areas of genealogical research and reciprocal research opportunities.

14. GENEALOGY AND VOLUNTEERISM

Over the past year we have seen how '*Team Ireland*' can perform with passion, drive and sheer commitment to get the job done for Ireland. In these recessionary times we build upon the legacy of resilience shown by our parents and grandparents faced with similarly dire economic circumstances. The "*Is Féidir Linn*" spirit, of which, President Barack Obama spoke so eloquently on his visit to Dublin in 2011, is certainly alive and kicking as

local communities all around Ireland played their part our largest homecoming party ever *'The Gathering Ireland'*.

Drawing on our deep and ancient ancestral ties with the land, home-place and local parish, communities reached out to Ireland's vast diaspora to invite the descendants of our emigrants to visit us in 2013. Local groups undertook research, poring over parish and school registers, checking memorial inscriptions and reading-up on local history—the pride of place, people and the past is a central theme of *'The Gathering Ireland'*.

Besides organising its own events, the Society offered advice and guidance to local groups planning events based on genealogy, heraldry or local history. The Society's main event for *'The Gathering'* was organised in conjunction with the **National Maritime Museum of Ireland, Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council** and **Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company**. *'Bratacha 2013 – Festival of Flags & Emblems'* an international symposium on the history, heritage, culture and identities associated with flags and emblems. The event centred on **Europe Day**, Thurs. May 9th and ran until Sat. May 11th 2013 and featured lectures, workshops, exhibitions, family history stands and a community 'Parade of Flags'.

The festival theme of *'Flag Wavers & Followers'* examined ways of researching genealogical links with historical events and movements. The exploration of the flags and emblems associated with Irish military history will involve veterans' organisations, military historians, commemorative organisations and the Irish Defence Forces. *'Bratacha 2013'* was Ireland's first interdisciplinary exploration of the history, heritage and culture of the flags and emblems of the Irish at home and overseas.

Now as *The Gathering Ireland* is drawing to a close, organisations and community groups around the country are thinking of its legacy, if any. These various events may have been enjoyable and even very memorable for both organisers and participants alike, but has this hard work and community endeavour produced anything likely to be sustainable?

When all of our overseas family members and, of course, those newly found quite distant cousins have gone back home, tourism bodies may crunch the visitor numbers, but what have our local communities gained for all of their hard work? No doubt, some will see *'The Gathering'* in purely economic terms with an increase in seasonal employment to meet the welcome up-turn in overseas visitor numbers.

Others look to *'The Gathering'* as potentially providing a watershed of creativity in the cultural and heritage sectors fostering a new awareness, appreciation and knowledge of our nation's history, heritage and culture. Communities coordinated by ***Ireland Reaching Out*** and other groups have taken up the challenge of researching 'reverse genealogy' and, of course, their own local history. By all accounts, this was a wonderful journey of discovery which reconnects the local communities with its own past and reaches out across the globe to the descendants of our emigrants.

But essentially the success of *The Gathering Ireland* initiative is down to the hard word, dedication and creativity of local communities, voluntary groups and individuals who, using our shared genealogical heritage, answered Ireland's call in the depth of the worst recession in living memory and triumphed.

Many of the voluntary organisations that were heavily involved in *The Gathering Ireland* initiative are active on the ground all year around. For example, at the end of another very busy year this Society most definitely lived up to its longstanding reputation as **'Ireland's most active genealogical organisation'** with twenty-three Open Meetings, including twelve superb lectures; publishing a monthly newsletter, an Annual Journal, more memorials inscriptions on CD; maintaining a web presence; organizing group projects; offering circa 400 hours of archival access and free public research advice; jointly hosting *Bratacha 2013 – Festival of Flags & Emblems*; hosting stands at numerous events throughout the country, including at 'Back To Our Past' at the RDS and the *International Vexillological Congress* at Rotterdam and others; and, of course, maintaining an archive and research centre. The Society's officers and members, all volunteers, can be justifiably proud of the services provided by the Society throughout the entire year on a completely voluntary basis.

The legacy effects of *The Gathering Ireland* are far more than just tourism. According to figures supplied by **Fáilte Ireland** from an **Ipsos MRBI Omnibus Survey** taken in September 2013, 73% considered organising a Gathering has inspired people to work together; 80% thought that hosting a Gathering is a source of civic pride; 75% considered that *The Gathering* will be successful in attracting tourists and 77% thought that *The Gathering* is a worthwhile investment on behalf of tourism. Clearly, a strategy to ensure a worthwhile and sustainable legacy is required.

• **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 14.1. That consideration is afforded, in consultation with the National Archives and National Library, to the establishment of mechanisms whereby volunteers can assist in the indexation of records for uploading to Government's Genealogy Portal. Volunteers working from home on their own computers could greatly reduce the cost of the preparation of such records for uploading.
- 14.2. That consideration is afforded to requesting **Volunteer Ireland** - the National Volunteer Development Agency, to liaise with the County Steering Committees of *The Gathering* to assist local communities, voluntary groups and individuals considering legacy events or initiatives to capture and sustain the momentum created during *The Gathering Ireland*. This could be of exceptional importance in the servicing of the continued engagement with our diaspora or in the maintenance of local heritage sites, including graveyards and old churchyards, which are hugely significant parts of our genealogical heritage.
- 14.3. That consideration is afforded to the establishment of national framework consisting of the main local authority officials who directed *The Gathering* in each area, Fáilte Ireland and the tourism industry to build on the skill-sets and valuable experience gained during the organisation of *The Gathering* events throughout the country and to formulate effective strategies and mechanisms to support legacy endeavours by communities and voluntary groups. The training and knowledge-base achieved by local authority officials during the organisation of *The Gathering Ireland* must be viewed as a valuable resource for future developments and initiatives.

15. GENEALOGY AND PHILANTHROPY

As we've embarked on the decade of centenaries which will come to a close in 2013 with 100th anniversary of the ending of our Civil War we will have in 2022 the anniversary of the needless destruction of the **Irish Public Records Office** at the start of our Civil War in 1922 when over a thousand years of our nation's archival heritage went up in flames. This loss was not only Ireland's but, in fact, it was a huge section of our corpus of a wider and shared European archival heritage that was destroyed.

Another event, this time in living memory, that brought home the fragility of our shared European archival heritage was the shelling in August 1992 of the National and University Library in Sarajevo during the Bosnian Civil War. Over two million ancient manuscripts and rare books were destroyed in Sarajevo. The **University of Sarajevo** lost its entire library collections and this month, in the spirit of philanthropy and solidarity, the Genealogical Society of Ireland delivered a pallet load of donated academic books to the University of Sarajevo which includes a very significant contribution from the Irish School of Ecumenics at **Trinity College Dublin**. The shipment was sponsored by **Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company**.

Our shared European archival heritage is becoming much more accessible to the public through the European Union's '**Europeana Project**'. Europeana is an Internet portal acting as a single access point to millions of books, paintings, films, museum objects and archival records that have been digitised throughout Europe. The material comes from European cultural and scientific institutions. Europeana holds circa 20 million items from 1,500 institutions in 32 countries, of which almost one million are Irish. It offers arts and cultural institutions the opportunity to reach out to more users, increase their web traffic, enhance their users' experience and build new partnerships. Through Europeana, people can discover texts, images and audiovisual material, regardless of the country or institution in which they are held. (www.europeana.eu)

The **European Union Culture Fund** provided €400 million between 2007 and 2013 for the development of the Europeana Project, of which, Ireland received circa €2.2 million. This fund was available to 37 countries, member states and contiguous countries. Nevertheless, the EU funding only represents a small proportion of what is required on an on-going basis to digitise Ireland's archival collections, including those of a genealogical potential, the balance has to be sourced by national governments, many of which, are turning to philanthropy to fill the gap.

Although, in the current economic climate a great deal of emphasis has been placed by the government on 'attracting philanthropy' it is still unclear as to whether the potential availability of such funding is overly ambitious or even unrealistic. The Irish understanding of philanthropy may require considerable reassessment based not on an envy of the levels of philanthropy in the United States or attempts to emulate such, but aimed at creating a sustainable home-grown philanthropic culture, in which, our diaspora can participate.

• **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 15.1. That consideration is afforded to the commissioning of a feasibility study on the most appropriate and effective methods for attracting philanthropy for specific and well defined genealogical and archival

projects aimed at increasing the public access to such via the Government's genealogy portal.

- 15.2. That consideration is afforded to the possible establishment of part commercial and part philanthropic funded projects for major initiatives such as the digitisation of the 1926 Census where it is unlikely that all the funding could be sourced through philanthropy. See recommendation 6.8 above.
- 15.3. That consideration is afforded to the question of how our Republic can officially recognize meritorious citizens and members of our diaspora for exceptional services to the State or for philanthropic actions benefiting the arts, heritage, education and other sectors of Irish life. See recommendation 12.6 above.
- 15.4. That consideration is afforded to the possibly of sourcing of philanthropic funding on the European mainland to digitise and make publicly accessible the archival records of the **Wild Geese** and of the newly termed '**Wine Geese**'. The influence of the Wild Geese on the political, military, medical, business and commercial spheres in Europe is often overlooked. Their genealogical records may be the only ones extant for these families with little or nothing remaining in Ireland. Such a project would certainly be of interest to genealogists and historians and hopefully, it will also engage the general public our shared European archival heritage.

16. LEGISLATION

The Society has been very active in advocating legislative protection for our heritage and in particular, our genealogical and heraldic heritage. It was centrally involved with the campaign to have genealogy included in the ***Heritage Act, 1995***.

Building on the main provisions of that Act, the Society established ***An Foram Oidhreacht*** in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown in 1996 to engage all sectors involved with aspects of our national heritage. The Society published the recommendations of ***An Foram Oidhreacht*** in 1997 in '***Towards a County Heritage Policy***' in which, the Society proposals for the formulation of County Heritage Policies and the appointment of County Heritage Officers, were later adopted by the Minister as national policy.

NATIONAL LIBRARY & CHIEF HERALD OF IRELAND

In 1996 and 1997, the Society successfully achieved circa 28 amendments to the ***National Cultural Institutions Bill*** in Seanad Éireann with the assistance of Senator Paschal Mooney and the then minister, Michael D. Higgins, TD. A further 3 amendments were achieved in Dáil Éireann to this important piece of legislation which governs the operational of the National Library of Ireland (including the Genealogical Office – 'office' of the Chief Herald of Ireland) and the National Museum of Ireland.

Unfortunately certain provisions of the ***National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997***, were fundamentally flawed and, although the Act was not implemented until May 2005, attempts to have these sections amended in the interim proved unsuccessful.

Therefore, the Society advocated a totally new Bill in 2000 and drafted and presented its own Bill in 2005 which sought to rectify the deficiencies in the 1997 Act and to provide a new framework for the provision of genealogical and heraldic services by the State.

Genealogy and Heraldry Bill, 2006

The main purpose of the Bill was to repeal and to amend sections of the *National Cultural Institutions Act 1997* in respect of the State's delivery of genealogical, heraldic and vexillological services.

- Establish a Heraldic Authority for Ireland and provide for the functions, duties and powers thereof.
- Regularise and modernise the delivery of heraldic services by the State.
- Establish and make provision for an Office of Arms consisting of *Príomh-Aralt na hÉireann* (Chief Herald of Ireland) and *Leas-Phríomharalt na hÉireann* (Deputy Chief Herald of Ireland).
- Define, coordinate and establish procedures for the delivery of heraldic, vexillological and genealogical services by the State and for the formulation of policy in respect of such matters.
- Provide for the maintenance, protection, legal custody and public accessibility of records pertaining to the functions above.
- Provide for the retrospective confirmation of Grants of Arms made by the non-statutory Genealogical Office in the name of the Chief Herald of Ireland on behalf of the State since 1943.
- Provide for the granting of Arms to meritorious citizens and members of the diaspora.
- Provide for the establishment of Irish Heraldic Agents and Irish Vexillological Agents promoting the State's heraldic and vexillological services around the world on a commission basis.
- Provide for the establishment of a National Inventory of Genealogical Records and records of a genealogical potential.

Status of the Bill: Debated in Seanad Éireann December 12th 2006 and withdrawn by the presenter (Senator Brendan Ryan, Cork) at the request of the Minister (John O'Donoghue, TD) for examination by the Board of the National Library of Ireland.

Following the Minister's presentation of the *Genealogy and Heraldry Bill, 2006* to the Board of the National Library of Ireland for its consideration, the Chairman of the Board, Mr. Gerard Danaher, SC, suspended the operation of the 'office' of the Chief Herald of Ireland pending an examination of the legal basis for the granting of arms by the State.

In October 2007, the then Minister (Séamus Brennan, TD) advised Dáil Éireann that the State had no legislative basis for the granting of arms from April 1st 1943 until the implementation of the 1997 Act in May 2005 and suggested that a 'short Bill' would be required to rectify matters.

With the withdrawal of the Society's Bill in 2006 and with no movement by the government to introduce the 'short Bill', it was decided to concentrate on the core deficiencies of the 1997 Act and therefore, the Society advised on the drafting of a new Bill by Senator Alex White.

National Cultural Institutions (Amendment) Bill, 2008

The main purpose of the Bill was to provide a secure basis for future promotion of the State's genealogical and heraldic heritage, through the

Genealogical Office which is part of the National Library of Ireland. The Bill also seeks to confirm previous actions of the Genealogical Office over which legal doubts have been raised. The genealogical and heraldic history of Ireland is an important part of the nation's heritage and is of ongoing interest in terms of research, education, culture and tourism. A secure regulatory framework for the promotion of this area is therefore of importance.

Main provisions:

- Amending Section 13 of the National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997.
- Provide a proper legal basis for the operation of the State's heraldic services.
- Maintain a National Heraldic Register which would be open to public inspection and contain details of grants made by the Ulster King of Arms from February 2nd 1552 to March 31st 1943 and by the Genealogical Office (Chief Herald of Ireland) from April 1st 1943 onwards.
- Provide a mechanism for the cancellation of grants made since April 1st 1943 where the incorrect or 'bogus' information was supplied or at the request of the applicant.
- Provide for a Register of Flags and Emblems.
- Provide a mechanism for arrangements for the mutual recognition of grants between heraldic jurisdictions.
- Vest copyright in the recipient of the grant – not the State as is currently the case.
- Provide for openness and transparency in the application and granting process.
- Provide for the use of computer generated imagery as a less costly way of providing confirming grants of Arms. This was to reduce cost to the applicant.
- Provide a statutory obligation to promote an awareness, appreciation and knowledge of our genealogical, heraldic and vexillological heritage.

Status of the Bill: Presented by Senator Alex White. Lapsed 2011

1926 CENSUS OF IRELAND

The Society has campaigned for the early release of the 1926 Census even before the enactment in July 1993 of the *Statistics Act* which brought in the 100 year closure rule. For years it campaigned for the general reduction in this rule, however, in the *Genealogy & Heraldry Bill, 2006*, and in the Bills below, it advocated the provision of a '*Special Heritage Status*' for the first census taken after independence.

Statistics (Heritage Amendment) Bill, 2010

The sole purpose of the Bill was to amend the Statistics Act 1993, in relation to the first census of population of Ireland taken since the establishment of the State, to afford that census a special heritage status and to have such released to the public for genealogical, historical and other research.

Status of the Bill: Presented by Sen. Labhrás Ó Murchú. Lapsed 2011

Statistics (Heritage Amendment) Bill, 2011

As with the 2010 Bill, the sole purpose of the Bill was to amend the *Statistics Act 1993*, in relation to the first census of population of Ireland taken since the establishment of the State, to afford that census a special heritage status and to have such released to the public for genealogical, historical and other research.

Status of the Bill: Presented by Senator Labhrás Ó Murchú and debated in Seanad Éireann on October 16th 2013 and voted down by the government.

Statistics (1926 Census) Bill, 2013

The sole purpose of this Bill is amend the *Statistics Act 1993*, in relation to the first census of population of Ireland taken since the establishment of the State to afford that census a special heritage status and to have such released to the public for genealogical, historical and other research.

Status of the Bill: Presented by Seán Ó Fearghaíl, TD, and is currently on the Order Paper for Dáil Éireann for second stage.

OTHER LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

The Society has previously campaigned against legislative provisions which sought to alter, usually by default, the status of public records held by the State on individuals like those of the **General Register Office**. Whilst, it is readily understood that this was not necessarily the intention of the drafters of the legislation or of the Ministers concerned, vigilance and the proffering of amendments, where appropriate, is always required.

Another Oireachtas Committee adopted the same view of the *Freedom of Information Bill* and proposed measures to ensure that the status of these records was not altered by applying definitions based on the *Civil Registration Act, 2004*.

Freedom of Information Bill, 2013

The following extract is from the *Report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform on the Draft Heads of the General Scheme of the Freedom of Information Bill 2012*.

The report was launched at the Houses of the Oireachtas (Irish Parliament) on Wednesday 26th June 2013.

GENEALOGY - 'PERSONAL INFORMATION ON INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS HELD BY THE STATE' OR 'PUBLIC INFORMATION HELD ON INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS BY THE STATE'

- The Joint Committee, given the 'Gathering' and the growing desire among those wishing to research their Irish heritage, notes that access to genealogical records is an important issue. The Joint Committee considers that the Freedom of Information legislation should be expanded to include the records of the General Register Office. The legislation should be specific in regarding these records as 'public information held on individual citizens by the State' as this should ensure public access and allow genealogical research.
- The Joint Committee is concerned that, without this, genealogical records could or would be classified as 'personal information on individual citizens held by the State' and, therefore, there could result the unintended consequence of narrowing, rather than broadening, access for genealogical research. Access in those circumstances could require any requestor for information to establish a personal familial link with the individual recorded in order to have access to the information.
- The Joint Committee does not wish to be prescriptive in regard to the inclusion of genealogical research under the Act as the Joint Committee notes that this

would require a definition of 'genealogy'; for example, would 'genealogy' be the study of any family or individual whether related to the researcher or not; or could 'genealogy' be interpreted as 'one researching ones own ancestry' - the latter would have a very negative impact on public accessibility to such records.

- Therefore, given the above concerns the Joint Committee consider it appropriate to seek the inclusion, in the legislation, of the following as a guiding principle by which record holders (State and State Agencies) would give public access to records with a genealogical potential by the inclusion of a Section that states that the legislation endorses and fully supports the ***Principle of Public Ownership and Right of Access to our Genealogical heritage'*** - this will allow Statutory Instruments and Departmental Guidelines to take cognisance of this Principle when assessing public accessibility to records with a genealogical potential.
- The Joint Committee note that such a principle may have no implications for copyright as the Joint Committee's understanding is that copyright, as such, does not exist in respect of Parish Registers.

Status of the Bill: Presented by the Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform and is currently at Committee Stage.

• **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 16.1. That consideration is afforded to the restoration of the ***National Cultural Institutions (Amendment) Bill, 2008*** to the Order Paper of Seanad Éireann or the incorporation of its provisions in the upcoming amendment of the ***National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997*** as this will facilitate the Minister's delivery of the objective as set forth in the *Programme for Government*.
- 16.2. That consideration is afforded to the review of the provisions proposed by the Society in its ***Genealogy & Heraldry Bill, 2006***, for possible inclusion in the planned amendment of the ***National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997***.
- 16.3. That consideration is afforded to the Oireachtas Joint Committee recommending to the Minister of Public Expenditure and Reform that the clarification sought by the following amendment to the ***Freedom of Information Bill, 2013*** be accepted for the avoidance of any doubt and to alleviate and fears as to misinterpretation of the intention of the Bill. In Section 2, to delete the text “;” on line 38 of page 13 and substitute the following text: “, and, notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, shall not be construed as so as to impede, restrict or otherwise frustrate public access to the records held by the General Register Office in accordance with section 61 of the Civil Registration Act, 2004;”
- 16.4. That consideration is afforded to the provisions of the ***Statistics (1926 Census) Bill, 2013***, as a simple and straightforward technical amendment to the ***Statistics Act, 1993***, it will facilitate the Minister's delivery of the objective as set forth in the *Programme for Government*.
- 16.5. That consideration is afforded to the review of the ***Civil Registration Act, 2004*** in respect of the potential benefits to the promotion of our genealogical heritage by the reclassification of all records held by General Register Office over seventy years old as 'historic records' and to the provision of free access to such registers via the Government's Genealogy Portal.

17. NATIONAL POLICY

During the Seanad debate on the *National Cultural Institutions Bill* in 1996, the then Minister **Michael D. Higgins, TD**, accepted a proposal by this Society to conduct a *Survey of Genealogical Practices in Ireland*. With the change of government that year it fell to the new Minister **Síle de Valera, TD**, to launch this important nationwide consultation and survey.

The Minister commissioned the Heritage Council to carry out the survey and indeed, its *Interim Report on Genealogical Practices in Ireland* published in 1998 was very promising and was widely acclaimed. However, the production of its final report in 2000 was an unmitigated disaster for Irish genealogy as it strayed significantly from its original terms of reference, pandered to vested interests and therefore, it was very publicly rejected by the Minister (Síle de Valera, TD). A wonderful opportunity to develop a national policy on the delivery of genealogical services in Ireland was lost for over a decade.

The editorial in the June 2011 issue of the *'Ireland's Genealogical Gazette'* urged the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, **Jimmy Deenihan, TD**, to bring together, in a structured manner, those involved in genealogy in Ireland to formulate a national strategy for the promotion of ancestry tourism and related heritage products. Therefore, the Society warmly applauded the Minister's decision to convene a meeting on Wednesday September 7th 2011 of groups and individuals who are professionally involved in the provision, dissemination and use of genealogical records. The purpose of the meeting was to establish the current position regarding the provision of genealogical services and to discuss options for further development of these services. Over fifty people gathered in the National Library to present their views on the future of Irish genealogical services.

However, given the widely differing views expressed by the various groups and individuals at the seminar in September 2011, the achievement of a consensus on a *National Policy on Genealogy* would require the proactive engagement by all stakeholders in meaningful and properly structured consultative process. It is important that the process is both comprehensive in its remit and inclusive in its deliberations to ensure the fullest participation by all stakeholders in the national interest. In this regard, the initiative by the Joint Oireachtas Committee to convene hearings on this matter is a very positive and hugely significant development.

Participants at the September 2011 seminar, from the commercial and non-commercial sectors, were generally hopeful for the future of Irish genealogy and, in particular, welcomed the openness and determination of the Minister who promised to bring forward a policy document on Irish genealogy. In the interim there has been very little, if any, progress on matters in the *'Programme for Government'* on the release of the 1926 census and on addressing the serious anomalies in the *National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997* in respect of heraldry.

Therefore, in order to achieve a number of sustainably achievable objectives set out in any *National Policy on Genealogy* it should be published firstly in draft form accompanied by a meaningful and structured consultative framework to engage the sector and the general public in the formulation of a *National Policy on Genealogy*. Indeed, the *History Ireland* 'Hedge School' held at the BTOP event at the RDS in October discussed the possibility of convening a national forum on genealogical services. The forum, under an

independent Chairperson, could discuss the Minister's proposals and possibly, agree a unified vision on the future of Irish genealogy, including matters of best practice, access, ethics and sustainable cooperation.

To ensure that all sections of the 'genealogical community' and all shades of opinion are included, this forum should avoid the needless confusion caused by 'multi' or 'cross-representation'. Bodies such as the Clans of Ireland (inc. May 25th 1990), Standing Council of Irish Chiefs & Chieftains (est. Oct. 5th 1991), Irish Family History Foundation (inc. May 10th 1990) and the Council of Irish Genealogical Organisations (est. July 9th 1994) should represent all of their members. Any other voluntary genealogical or heraldic organisation seeking representation should be, for example, of not less than five years standing, meet regularly and have at least 30 members with a proper governance structure.

The commercial sector, educational institutions and genealogical publishers should also be invited to participate. Such an inclusive and transparent process could contribute very significantly to the formulation and implementation of a *National Policy on Genealogy*.

- **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 17.1. That in the formulation and implementation of a *National Policy on Genealogy* that clear policy objectives value the separate and yet complementary, contributions made by the commercial and voluntary sectors; prioritising and fully endorsing the '*Principle of Public Ownership and Right of Access*' to our genealogical heritage and recognising genealogy as primarily a national resource, from which, the cultural, educational, commercial and tourism sectors may, as appropriate and in the public interest, develop products, create employment and improve the economic circumstances and prospects of our country.
- 17.2. That consideration is afforded to the commissioning of a new survey on the provision of genealogical services by voluntary groups in Ireland to inform policy matters on the levels of voluntary activity in this sector. Since the last comprehensive surveyed was conducted by **Tony McCarthy, MA**, and published in '*Irish Roots*' magazine in 1996, Irish genealogy has evolved immeasurably with a truly global reach on-line. Whilst, the 1996 survey is an excellent base from which to evaluate the progression of the provision of genealogical services and the expansion of public interest in ancestry matters in Ireland.
- 17.3. That consideration is afforded to the potential of the establishment of a ***National Genealogy & Heraldry Policy Committee*** by the Minister to examine, propose and advise on public policy matters relating to the State's provision of genealogical and heraldic services and on the development of the sector generally. Membership of the committee should include representatives from both the commercial and voluntary sectors selected in a manner similar to that of the Sectoral Representatives on Strategic Policy Committees at local authority level.
- 17.4. That consideration is afforded in the formulation of a *National Policy on Genealogy* to the potential of cultivating the genealogy sector as a good jobs growth area with likes of Ancestry, Findmypast Ireland,

Eneclann, Ancestor Network and others growing in this space. The possibility of Ireland establishing clusters of genealogy companies as exist in Provo or Salt Lake City in Utah should be explored in the context of attracting successful companies MyHeritage to follow Ancestry.com and locate in Ireland.

- 17.5. That consideration is afforded in the formulation of a *National Policy on Genealogy* to the potential of providing standardised definitions of genealogy, genetic genealogy, commercial genealogy, heraldry and vexillology for use in the Irish context by legislators, policymakers and others to ensure that the interpretations of any provisions of the *National Policy on Genealogy* are fully and unambiguously understood by all concerned with the implementation of the policy objectives.
- 17.6. That consideration is afforded in the formulation of a *National Policy on Genealogy*, as distinct from any departmental internal policy document on the subject, that a meaningful and structured process of consultation with all the stakeholders is assured and that such is conducted on the basis of equity of access and participation in that process. The process could include an annual conference.

18. CONCLUSION

The above recommendations present the Oireachtas Joint Committee with a set of comprehensive measures aimed at providing the framework for the development of a meaningful and structured consultative environment facilitating the formulation of specific objectives covering many aspects of our genealogical heritage.

The recommendations envisage the establishment of a priority list of actions and consultations, from which, specific and targeted measures can be put in place to enable the formulation and implementation of a sustainable *Development Plan for the Capture of the Full Value of our Genealogical Heritage*.

The President, vice-Presidents, Board of Directors and Members of the Genealogical Society wish to record our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Chairperson and Members of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht for inviting the Society to submit this document and for the opportunity to address the Committee.

Michael Merrigan, MA, FGS
General Secretary
Genealogical Society of Ireland
11, Desmond Avenue
Dún Laoghaire
Co. Dublin

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For further information on the Society see: www.familyhistory.ie or Facebook www.facebook.com/familyhistory.ie or Twitter @GenSocIreland