

Cumann Geinealais na hÉireann

Ireland's Genealogical Gazette

(incorporating "The Genie Gazette")

Vol. 1 No. 4

www.familyhistory.ie

April : Aibreán 2006

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Famine Commemoration Day

The call for the designation of the last Sunday in May of each year as the National Famine Commemoration Day is gathering strength as Teachtaí Dála and Seanadóirí from all parties and none lend their support to this nationwide campaign.

For many it comes as a major surprise that Ireland has never officially acknowledged the greatest human disaster in its history in the way other countries mark very significant events in own their history. Most countries commemorate events, whether joyous or tragic, that have shaped their development as nations.

It has been argued that The Great Famine in Ireland, in which, over a million and a half people died of starvation and disease, and a further million fled the country, was an episode just too painful to commemorate on an annual basis. But, yet, it continues to be a powerful reminder of the fragility of life itself and we still draw upon its memory when we're confronted with similar tragedies today around the world. The record of the Irish people in the provision of famine and disaster relief is a testimony to their under-

standing of the suffering of their ancestors between 1845 and 1850.

Whilst, many people rightly question the value of the State commemorating events like The Great Famine or the 1916 Easter Rising, cynicism has certainly taken root on this issue. Far from assessing each event in its particular context and on its own merit, the issue of cost alone arises. Yet, for one of the richest nations on earth, it seems almost obscene to deny due recognition to a period of great suffering in our own nation's not too distant past.

Revisionist historians and some casual, often much less informed commentators, have suggested that The Great Famine only really badly hit the more isolated parts of the west coast. Thus leaving the rest of the country to some sort of idyllic mid-Victorian rural bliss reminiscent of Eamonn De Valera's Gaelic utopian myth of the 1930s with comely maidens dancing at the crossroads etc. This widely held ignorance of the true extent of the sheer devastation and havoc caused by the Irish famine in both human and economic terms is, of itself, reason enough for it never to be forgotten.

The present day prosperity of Ireland wrought from the hard work of its citizens, careful planning and strategic investment of European Funds, is something, of which, we can be rightly proud. But, lest we forget, it was not too long ago that our greatest export was our own people from the days of The Great Famine right down to the 1980s.

This culture of emigration was endemic throughout Irish society and it shaped our view of our nation and ourselves. It was, in many ways, seen as a national shame with the lofty ideals of the 1916 Proclamation shattered. But out of this misery of families split and communities lost, a new invigorated Irish Diaspora grew. These new waves of arrivals on the shores of distant lands were set to enhance the sense of identity of Ireland's Diaspora, as much, as the older arrivals shared their long story with the new. This "long story" held the memories, lost or ignored at home, of The Great Famine and the leaving of Ireland. Our modern prosperous and peaceful Ireland owes much to the custodians of this "long story" - the legacy of The Great Famine unites us all forever.

Changing Ireland—Census 2006

Eighty years on from the first census of population conducted since independence, on Sunday 23rd April 2006 a census will be taken in Ireland. But the Ireland to be covered by this census is a place light years away from the Free State of 1926. Back then the economy was very weak and poverty abounded. Emigration was the only hope for many to escape a land of little opportunity

still suffering the effects of the War of Independence and a bitter Civil War that followed the Treaty. But now the Ireland of the 21st century is a land of circa 167 different nationalities and almost the same number of languages. In 2005 alone 200,000 migrant workers signed up for Personal Public Service numbers. These new members of our community came mostly from Poland and the

Baltic states all joining the near half a million "New Irish" to be recorded by this census which is to be conducted in sixteen different languages besides English and Irish. Languages from Arabic, Chinese through Polish and Russian to Yorúbá—a language spoken by Nigerians, all to meet the needs of a much changed Irish society. Multilingualism will be a necessity for future genealogists!!

John Philip Brooke-Little 1927-2006

The death occurred on February 13th 2006 of the founder of the important English heraldic organisation, The White Lion Society, Mr. John Brooke-Little. This remarkable man was one of England's foremost heraldic experts and author of a number of important works on the subject. Born at Stone Field, Kidbrooke Grove, London on April 6th 1927, his father, Raymond, was an electrical engineer from East Knoyle and his mother, Constance Egan, was the author of children's books. She later served her son, John, as the Hon. Secretary of the Heraldry Society. His interest in heraldry began while John was at primary school—drawing coats-of-arms and, of course, he had a love of history which shone through all his works in later years. In Claysmore at Iwerne Minster in Dorset, where John attended school from 1941, he founded the Society of Heraldic Antiquaries and even assumed the title of "Claysmore King of Arms". While at Oxford he decided to resuscitate this society in 1947 with the publication of "*The Escutcheon*" and later "*The Coat of Arms*" in 1950. John was to be editor of the latter for fifty years from which The Heraldry Society was

born to be followed in 1986 by The White Lion Society. On his graduation from Oxford in 1952, John was appointed to the Earl Marshal's staff to prepare for the coronation in that year of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II. He was appointed to the position of Bluemantle Pursuivant in 1956 and assisted in the planning of the funeral of Sir Winton Churchill in 1965. In 1967 he was promoted to the position of Richmond Herald and was involved with the planning of the investiture of the eldest son of the British monarch, Prince Charles, as Prince of Wales at Caernarfon in 1969. As a tireless organiser, he was responsible for the establishment of an in-house conservation department at the College of Arms in London as Librarian from 1974 to 1994. This department began to repair and bind the many valuable books and manuscripts held at by the English College of Arms. Indeed, The White Lion Society, as friends of the College of Arms, has collected funds to further this very worthwhile heritage project and donated much needed material and equipment to the College. In 1980, John was promoted to the prestigious position of Norroy & Ulster King of Arms and

remained in that position until the death of Sir Anthony Wagner in 1995, upon which, he became Clarenceux King of Arms. He retired from this position in 1997 on his 70th birthday. The title of Ulster King of Arms was attached to the English heraldic office of Norroy in 1943 on the transfer of the Office of Arms in Dublin to Irish control on April 1st 1943 when Mr. Edward MacLysaght was appointed as the first Chief Herald of Ireland. John's Irish heritage was reflected in the exemplifications of the Arms of Brooke-Little, especially Quartering the Arms of his mother's family of Egan. As a devout Roman Catholic, he took a great interest in the heraldry of his church and inspired others to do so too. He married Mary Pierce in 1960 at St. Etheldreda's Church, Ely Place, London and is survived by his wife, sons Philip, Leo and Merlin and his daughter Clare. His funeral service was conducted on Thursday 23rd Feb. 2006 at Holy Trinity Hethe in Oxfordshire with the celebrant of the Requiem Mass, Fr. Mark Elvin, Cap OFM, also a member of The White Lion Society. The GSI extends its sincere condolences to John's family and friends. MM

Irish Military Archives

The Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on March 14th 2006, at which, we were honored to have **Commandant Victor Laing** of the Irish Military Archives as Guest Speaker. Comdt. Laing gave an overview of the extensive collections held at Cathal Brugha Barracks in Dublin. Starting with the unique archive gathered by the Bureau of Military History which was established in 1947 by Mr. Oscar Traynor, TD, Minister for Defence. The object of the bureau was to assemble material on the independence movement between 1913 and 1921. Comdt. Laing gave examples of the type of items collected from photographs to written testimonies from members of the Irish

Volunteers. Papers cover the Howth Gun-running, the Easter Rising, the formation of the first Dáil and the outbreak of the Irish War of Independence. In addition papers cover the Civil War period, the period leading up to the outbreak of World War II, the war period and then the more modern files dealing with the Irish Army's extensive periods on United Nations duties. There are also collections of private papers which were donated to the Irish Military Archives which is a place of deposit under the National Archives Act, 1986. For further information write to: Military Archives, Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin 6, Ireland. Or telephone: 00353.1.804 6457. (01. 804 6457)

Sponsorship of Postage Costs

The Board would like to express its sincere gratitude to **Mr. David Paling, MGSI** for his kind sponsorship of the postage for the March issue of this newsletter. David has a special interest in the lives and times of persons involved in the production and design of Irish coinage up the year 1800. His article on the 17th century "St. Patrick Coinage" attracted much interest. David may be contacted at David.Paling@familyhistory.ie The Board of the Society always welcomes and encourages sponsorship initiatives like this one from our Members. Interested? Please contact the Editor.

The Irish Genealogists' Bible—New Edition!

What has become the genealogists' bible here in Ireland—John Grenham's "*Tracing Your Irish Ancestors*" ISBN 0-7171-3976-X has now been released in its third edition. Much enlarged to assist persons at all levels of research experience and expertise. Earlier sections deal with the categories of existing resources for genealogical research and in particular, the book deals with this matter from the point of view of researchers in Ireland and overseas. In a publication that is, on the whole, very welcome, there are certainly some very

unfortunate omissions. Amongst these is a failure to provide any listing of the Church Registers of the non-Catholic denominations in Ireland. Extensive coverage is afforded to the listing of Catholic sources held in a number of locations with maps of the Catholic Parishes in each county. These maps are of very little value as the boundaries of Catholic parishes were continuously altering to meet the growing urban populations and the reorganization of the administration of the Catholic Church following emancipation in 1829. The presentation of the

information would have been better if it had followed the county resources format rather than the resource category format. This would have placed the information in the readily accessible standard directory format which is universally understood. However, all in all, this publication is an invaluable aide to all involved in Irish genealogical research. Nobody embarking on any family history research project should do so without sensibly equipping themselves with a copy of this publication. Copies available via www.gillmacmillan.ie

Snippets from the A.G.M.

The Society's Annual General Meeting held on March 14th 2006 elected the Board of the Society for the period 2006/7—but again, there were no surprises. Rory Stanley, FGSI retained the position of Cathaoirleach (Chair) with the rest his colleagues holding their positions. Whilst, this is a testimony to their volunteerism and commitment to their Society, the absence of "new blood" on the Board is always regretted. Every organisation benefits from the injection of new ideas and fresh thinking on a number of issues. Hopefully, the Cathaoirleach will be able to persuade able and willing members to take up the two posts remaining vacant since the AGM—Hon. Treasurer and Public Relations Officer.

As usual, the Hon. Secretary delivered the Annual Report on behalf of the Members of the Board of Directors of the Society. This report covered the Society's activities from March 2005 to March 2006 and including some of the most important developments for the Society in recent years. Delivered in category format rather than chronologically, the Hon. Secretary

outlined the position of An Daonchartlann—the Society's Archive; the Society's Publications; Our Open Meetings; Society Projects; Development Matters and finally, the Board's work on National and International Matters.

The Daonchartlann at the Martello Tower at Seapoint is now ably managed by Séamus O'Reilly, MGSI, Archivist, who is currently reorganizing the catalogue and retrieval system. However, volunteers are urgently required by Séamus to both complete the task and open this facility for more hours for members. A special mention was made of the contribution made to the study of Irish Jewish Studies by our Vice-President, Stuart Rosenblatt, FGSI.

The Society's publication programme was greatly altered to meet the spiraling postage and printing costs. The quarterly journal has now been replaced with an enlarged biannual journal, whilst, the newsletter got a makeover and a new name in January 2006. The possibility of publishing items on CD Rom is being considered by the Editor, Margaret Conroy, MGSI.

The Open Meetings attracted a fine array of Guest Speakers arranged by Róisín Lafferty, MGSI and the Special Meeting to inaugurate our President in October was very enjoyable.

Barry O'Connor, FGSI and his team successfully completed the transcription of the Military Cemetery at Grangegorman and published it last month. On Development Matters fund raising loomed large and the need to identify new revenue streams was stressed. The joint INTERREG application was unsuccessful and the Board is looking at other grant options from the State and Europe.

On National & International Matters the AGM heard of the Society's recent registration as a Nominating Body for Seanad Éireann (Senate) and the consultation process regarding the Registry of Deeds. The Society's continued contribution to local and national heritage issues and our membership of The Wheel. On legislative matters, the AGM heard that a Bill prepared by the Society is being progressed with parliamentarians at the moment.

Obligations of a Genealogist

As genealogists and social historians, in the course of many years of research, we collect an enormous amount of information about the subjects of our erstwhile quest. Most of us think nothing of this horde of papers, photographs, certificates and notes—all part of the job at hand. But do we ever stop, even for a moment, to think of the value to genealogy of the information we've so lovingly amassed? The reasons each of us had for starting may well have been superseded—the family now knows it's roots and have become impervious to even the slightest gem of new information. So what then for our much cherished files, notes and miscellaneous papers when it's our

time to be the subject of an obituary? Have we ever thought about our life's work as recycled paper or possibly landfill or do we care? Nobody would blame our spouses or partners for ignominiously disposing of what they, possibly rightly, perceived as the "third party" in their relationship—genealogy and all its baggage. But don't we owe a duty of care to those we leave behind? Why not give our loved ones security in the knowledge that our papers, files and notes will all be gratefully received in a new home at the Archives of the Genealogical Society of Ireland? So as you sit down amongst your cherished papers, why not give a thought to mentioning your Society in your Will?

Dr. John E. de Courcey Ireland

As this newsletter was going to print news came of the sad passing of an old friend of many members of this Society. Ireland's premier maritime historian, commentator and writer, Dr. John De Courcey Ireland, died at his home in Dalkey, Co. Dublin on Weds 5th April 2006 at the age of 94. His life was dedicated to the study and promotion of Ireland's maritime heritage. He was a prime mover in the establishment of the Irish Maritime Institute and of the Maritime Museum in Dún Laoghaire. The Society extends its sincere condolences to John's family, friends and colleagues. RIP

Membership of the Genealogical Society

Membership of the Genealogical Society of Ireland is open to all persons with an interest in genealogy, heraldry, vexillology or social history whether based in Ireland or overseas. The Society strongly advocates the "*Principle of Public Ownership & Right of Access*" to our heritage in all its varied and wonderful forms. Therefore, members are always encouraged to contribute to the heritage resources of future generations by recording their own family history, story and lore for deposit in the Genealogical Society's Archives or publication

in the Society's biannual journal. As members of the Genealogical Society of Ireland we appreciate the importance of our heritage not only to people in Ireland, north and south, but also to Ireland's vast Diaspora. We have links with similar organisations overseas and we exchange journals with over sixty societies. Our activities are many and varied—full details on the website. For many, membership of this Society, means playing an active and vital role in the study and promotion of Irish heritage. **Membership Packages. Ireland:-** Offering

ordinary membership of the Society, Membership Card, voting rights, use of the Society's Archive, monthly newsletter by mail, biannual Journal by mail, and the right to purchase the Society's publications at Special Members' prices of up to 50% off selected publications. This also includes an optional second Membership Card for a household member, including voting rights, for an all inclusive cost of just €30.00 per annum. **Overseas:-** Offering the same at €40.00 per annum. Join OR renew membership on line on the Society's website—www.familyhistory.ie/shop

IRELAND'S GENEALOGICAL GAZETTE

is published by the

Genealogical Society of Ireland

11, Desmond Avenue, Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, Ireland

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www.familyhistory.ie/shop**DIARY DATES***Tuesday Apr. 11th & May 9th 2006***Evening Open Meeting***Dún Laoghaire Senior College**Cumberland Street, Dún Laoghaire**20.00hrs—22.00hrs**Wednesday Apr. 26th & May 24th 2006***Morning Open Meeting***Port View Hotel, Marine Rd., Dún**Laoghaire**10.30hrs—12.30hrs**Contribution €3.00 p.p.**(Coffee/Tea included at Morning Meetings)***QUERIES**

Neralie Thorp, P.O. Box 450, Mornington 3931, Victoria, Australia E-mail: neralie.thorp@bigpond.com Wrote:- Seeking great grandparents Margaret Doole b. Antrim 1833 to James **DOOLE** and Margaret **FOSTER**. She married Henry McGuigan b. 1832 in Armagh on 3 Jun 1852 in Drummaul, Antrim. Their children James Dool **McGUIGAN** b. 1853 in Antrim, died 1897 in Camperdown, Victoria, b. 1856 Antrim and d. 1857 in Warnambool, William b. 1858 in Port Fairy, died 1863 and Thomas b. 1863, Margaret b. 1866 and David b. 1868 all born in Warnambool, Victoria. Any info. please.

Gillian Crisp 11 Galway Crescent, S.W., Calgary, Alberta, T3E 4Y2, Canada. E-mail: Jilly66@telus.net Wrote:- looking for my Great-Great-Grandfather, William Malone **BANKS** b. Dublin, Ireland 1811. Moved to England & located 1851 Camberwell, Surrey Census—a Seal Engraver, b. Dublin & his wife was Eliza b. 1816 Kentish Town. Children: Eliza b. 1843, Edward C. b. 1846, Caroline b. 1847 all born Camberwell & William b. 1850 in Bermondsey. Any info. please.

Mrs. Alix Freeburger Cam, Eight Bells, 16, Bay Crescent, Swanage, Dorset, BH19 1RB, UK E-mail: afreeburger@btconnect.com Wrote:- Searching for the origin of Martin J. **CARROLL** son of James Carroll b. c. 1810 Ireland. Circa 1851/1861 to England. In 1861 living Walsall, Staffordshire. Coal miners. On 17 Oct 1864, Martin Carroll marr. Mary Ann **MERRICK** (b. 1846 Staffordshire). Had 4 children Ellen, Catherine, Mary Jane, & James Henry before leaving England circa 1871 for New York. Wife & children arrived New York 1872. Settled in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Had more children: Loretta Carroll (b 1878), Michael Joseph (b. 1880), John (b. 1883), Sabina (b. 1885), and William Joseph (b. 1888). Loretta Carroll is my great grandmother. Any info much appreciated.

Anita Tompkins, 215 Sunset Drive, Wapp. Falls, NY 12590, USA. E-mail: GroovyNeatsa@aol.com Wrote:- Researching Christopher **MONAHAN** b. c. 1826 Ireland, living in NY 1849 & wife Maryann **HEALY** b. c. 1827 Ireland the dau. of John and Maryann Healy, siblings Charles, Sarah, Isabella & Elizabeth & John or Joseph. Buried in Greenwood cemetery in Brooklyn, NY. All info. appreciated.

NOTA BENE:- Queries are only published at the discretion of the editor and where a mailing address and e-mail address are provided.

Grandfather was a Councillor

A Special Open Meeting was held on Tuesday March 28th 2006 to welcome visitors from TIARA in Boston, Massachusetts, USA where James Scannell gave a presentation on the theme of 'When Genealogy Meets Local History' and offered as an example of how the two disciplines can be combined with a case study on his paternal grandfather James J. **Scannell** who was a prominent Dublin and Bray businessman, and public representative, drawing on various sources and showed how each discipline must incorporate an element of the other in order to place events in context. James J. Scannell was born in Faren, Co. Cork in 1870, the first born of three sons and four daughters in his father's family who was farmer and who was also named James. James J. learned the furniture trade in Belfast and returned to Dublin where he rose to be a manager in McBirneys in Dublin. He married his wife Emily **McCoubrey** in 1904 and in time they had six children (3 sons and 3 daughters, one of whom died in infancy) my father Jack was born in 1905. James J. also set himself up in business as an Auctioneer sometime around 1906 at 4 Bachelor's Walk in Dublin - the family firm ceased trading in 1957. Politically, James J. was a Nationalist and friend of Joseph **Devlin** in Belfast, was a national trustee for the Ancient Order of Hibernians in Ireland and served a town councillor on Bray Urban

District Council 1911- 1914 but failed to be re-elected in 1914 due to divisions with the local Nationalists which split the vote. James J. died in 1939 and his wife Emily in 1948. In 1914, he was also appointed a Justice of the Peace. In dealing with some of these events, James outlined what was happening at national level to place them in their proper context which is essential for any local history or genealogical / family history project. James revealed that much of the family information was contained in a family bible which is passed down to the eldest male in the family who is required to update the family entries in it before handing it on. James is the current holder of the bible which in time will be passed to his son Philip. Information on James J's political career in Bray came from the local newspapers of the day "*The Wicklow People*" and "*The Wicklow Newsletter*" and from newspaper obituaries published at the time of his death with additional information coming from various family papers which were collected by James' late father Jack Scannell. All this material saved a great deal in search time and highlighted the need for a 'family activist' in every family to note the genealogical details for future generations in a family file. This special open meeting concluded with a buffet prepared by Roz **Stanley**, MGSi and Margaret **Conroy**, MGSi. The visitors from TIARA included two

members of this Society, Mary Ellen **Grogan** and George **Handran**. The Cathairleach of the Society, Rory Stanley, FGSI, thanked James Scannell and confirmed that the Society will be represented at the F.G.S. conference in Boston later in the Summer.

NEXT MEETING: 11th April 2006, Mr. Pat Lynch of the Royal British Legion (Republic of Ireland Branch) will speak on the life experiences of the Irish soldiers returning from WW1.

AN DAONCHARTLANN

The Society's Archive is based at the restored Martello Tower at Seapoint, County Dublin. "An Daonchartlann" as it is called, is open to members and visitors at various times during the month. As it is entirely staffed by our volunteers, the times of operation may vary. Therefore, the Archivist, **Mr. Séamus O'Reilly**, MGSi, advises all intending to visit the Society's Archive to telephone (01) 202 0464 to ascertain opening times. Persons visiting the Martello Tower are advised to use public transport—DART (rail) to Seapoint Station approx. 4 minutes walk.