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GENEALOGY
HERALDRY
VEXILLOLOGY
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Why Blame the Board of the National Library of Ireland?

The Minister for Arts, Sport & Tourism, **Mr. John O'Donoghue, TD**, gave a very short written reply on Tuesday Nov. 7th to a number of detailed Parliamentary Questions tabled by the Fine Gael Spokesperson, **Mr. Jimmy Deenihan, TD**, on the non-recognition of Irish coats-of-arms by the principal herald in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and certain copyright issues. Mr. O'Donoghue insisted that he, as Minister, has no statutory function in the matter. Despite the fact that the matters raised covered the period from 1943 to the establishment of the National Library of Ireland as an autonomous non-commercial semi-state body in May 2005 under the National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997, the Minister referred Deputy Deenihan to the provisions of the 1997 Act which are only operative from May 2005. Clearly the Minister failed to read these Parliamentary Questions carefully enough to realise his fundamental error of understanding regarding the periods of responsibility in his reply when he said that he had not been advised by the Board of the National Library of Ireland that there are deficiencies in the 1997 legislation. But the matters con-

cerned predated the appointment of the Board and the establishment of the semi-state body and therefore, they are in fact his ministerial responsibility. The Minister in the customary rush to abdicate ministerial responsibility in favour of governance by proxy has simply lost the plot on the timeline of the issues. It is he, as a legislator and the Minister concerned, who has the ultimate responsibility for the effectiveness of the legislation underpinning the operation of the National Library of Ireland – not the members of the Board that he appointed just last year. By kicking this important matter in to touch without any investigation whatsoever of the points raised, the Minister has simply chosen to ignore the problem and thereby, dismissing the legitimate concerns of many individuals, bodies corporate and institutions who purchased coats-of-arms from the Chief Herald of Ireland between April 1943 and May 2005. By referring Deputy Deenihan to various sections of the 1997 Act in response to such concerns indicates that the Minister has not sufficiently acquainted himself with the 1997 Act and that he has overlooked the fact that he only implemented those sections

in May of 2005. This is clearly another fine example of the abdication of ministerial responsibility in favour of governance by proxy to avoid any direct accountability to the Oireachtas and ultimately to the People of Ireland. Clearly, in the manner of his reply to these Parliamentary Questions, the Minister has unfortunately displayed an ignorance of the subject and a disdain for this aspect of our national heritage. Indeed, it appears that the Minister, by his reply to Deputy Deenihan, now places the blame on the Board of the National Library for the existence of any deficiencies in operation the 1997 Act and certainly, by his reply, he firmly puts the Board on notice that he should have been informed of any alleged deficiencies in the legislation. The *Genealogy & Heraldry Bill, 2006*, sponsored by **Senator Brendan Ryan**, would more than adequately resolve the matters raised by Deputy Deenihan in his Parliamentary Questions and indeed, retrospectively confirm the grants of arms made since 1943 and deal effectively with the all copyright issues raised. Certainly, the members of the Board of the NLI are not to blame for the obvious deficiencies in the current legislation.

Nollaig Shona agus Áthbhliain Fé Mhaise

The President of the Society, **Mr. Tony MacCarthy, MA, FGSI**, the Vice Presidents, Cathaoirleach, **Mr. Rory Stanley, FGSI** and the Board wish all our Members and our readers at home and overseas all the very best for Christmas and the New Year. This past year has been an eventful one for the Society especially with the achievement of our long-time goal of the publication of

draft legislation aimed at providing a sound basis for the State's delivery of heraldic services. Indeed, one objective of the *Genealogy and Heraldry Bill, 2006* has been very eagerly supported by all Irish genealogists. The creation of a special heritage status for the first census of population taken after independence aims to permit access to the **1926 Census Returns** at the National Archives.

The availability of the **1930 US Census** to worldwide research online through Ancestry.com has brought the issue of the closure of our 1926 Census in to focus. Many Irish people have used the 1930 US census returns to fill in the gaps in their research as only the 1901 and 1911 census returns are open here. Opening the 1926 Irish Census would make 2007 a very Happy New Year indeed!!!

Précis of the November Lecture

On Tues. Nov. 14th **Dr. Patrick Wyse Jackson** of the Dept. of Geology, Trinity College Dublin, delivered a very interesting talk "**Sir Richard Griffith (1784-1878) public servant, valuator and geologist**". The man responsible for Griffith's Valuation Survey. That was as much most of us knew of this remarkable Dubliner before this lecture. He has been called the "father of Irish geology" and yet that seems to be a very narrow description of the many and varied talents of Griffith. Born in Dublin in 1784 and educated at schools in Portarlington, Rathangan and Dublin Griffith served for a brief period in the Royal Irish Regiment of Artillery. He resigned from the army in 1801 to devote himself entirely to his scientific work which covered geology, engineering, mapmaking and surveying. He worked as an engineer with the Bog Commissioners 1809-13 and was a mining engineer with the Dublin Society 1812-29. He constructed roads and bridges in many counties, especially in Munster. He also had various duties with the Ordnance Survey Office between 1825 and the late 1840s as the Director of the Boundary Survey. However, it is

as Commissioner of the General Survey and Valuation of Rateable Property from 1827 to 1868 that we as genealogists know him best. In this capacity he was responsible for the Primary Valuation of Tenements 1848-64. However, amongst geologists he is better known for his production of a geological map of Ireland in 1811 and indeed, this map could also be considered as a work of art because of the colours he employed to indicate different features, rock formations and strata. Dr. Wyse-Jackson in this talk successfully brought home to his audience the importance of the achievements and exploits of this remarkable man. Griffith's attention to detail and his exacting administrative skills were matched by a seemingly unbounded energy and ability for multitasking. The scope of Griffith's Valuation alone displays the precision of his planning and administration with circa 150 surveyors working right across the island of Ireland each with detailed instructions from Griffith himself on how the valuations were to be calculated and the information compiled for the survey books and the accompanying maps. This survey provides as major resource for

genealogists, local historians, geographers and other researchers. Dr. Wyse-Jackson's very illuminating talk was aided by a PowerPoint presentation of the various maps and documents produced by Griffith. Following the lecture a very lively question and answer session produced a very worthwhile proposal on how this nation should honour and remember this amazing individual. Though, he is one of the few people that have a commemorative tablet on the house of his birth and on his later residence, the audience felt that an annual award for scientific excellence or achievement should be made in his name. Dr. Wyse-Jackson has certainly provided a very sound case for such an award and indeed, he has recently published an account of the life and times of Griffith. This was an excellent lecture on a remarkable Irishman.

SOCIETY'S LECTURE PROGRAMME

On Tues. Dec. 12th **Eileen Ó Dúill, MAPGI**, professional genealogist, will speak on the topic "**The Four Courts Fire of 1922**"- what was lost and what survived?

National Archives Building Programme

Genealogists and other researchers have long been concerned about the dearth of space available to receive new material at the National Archives of Ireland based at Bishop Street in Dublin. Though, plans were announced three years ago to expand the facility fear still exists that certain departments or state bodies which cannot transfer the records to the National Archives in accordance with the National Archives Act, 1986 due to the problem of space will seek less secure alternatives. This could unfortunately include an over zealous culling of archival material by officials at these departments or state bodies due to the lack of appropriate storage facilities. This concern was raised

in Dáil Éireann on Nov. 30th 2006 by Kildare North TD, **Ms Catherine Murphy**, who asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism, **Mr. John O'Donoghue, TD** for details on the brief and schedule of requirements for the new building to be constructed for the National Archives; and if the Minister will make a statement on the matter. In a written reply the Minister said "that the brief for a new building for the National Archives of Ireland commissioned by the OPW in 2003, and prepared in consultation with the National Archives, estimates the site area required to be 4,775 square metres and the total floor area required to be just over 20,500 square metres. Broken down by major func-

tions, and rounding areas to the nearest 250 m², the requirements specified are for 12,000 m² for Archives storage; 3,000 m² for staff areas and technical services; 1,500 m² for Public areas and 4,000 m² for Plant, circulation and related matters (Total 20,500 square metres). The new premises must accommodate the archives stored in those buildings and must enable the National Archives to accept transfers of Departmental records in accordance with the National Archives Act and must also accommodate the public and technical services of the National Archives, and its staff." Whether this new space will fully meet the future requirements of the National Archives only time will tell.

Ceremonies at St. Andrews on DVD

The **International Congress of Genealogical and Heraldic Sciences** held in St. Andrews in August is now captured on DVD. It features the opening ceremonies, plenary address, the Congress Banquet and the closing ceremony. Beginning with a song in Scots Gaelic sung by **Wilma Kennedy**. This very spirited rendition of "*Suas leis a' Gháidhlig*" (Up with the Gaelic Language) seems strangely out of context as a welcoming song. The formal proceedings have a distinctively Scottish flavour. Indeed, the international nature of the event was subsumed

into the ancient protocols of the University of St. Andrews. The entrance of the various Heralds dressed in their colourful tabards, including **Micheál Ó Comáin** wearing the beautiful new Tabard of the Chief Herald bearing the National Arms of Ireland, is impressive. The extensive use Latin in the opening addresses and the choice of music provides a quasi religious atmosphere. Britain's Princess Anne officially opened the Congress. Maybe the strict adherence to British precedence and protocols at this "international" event will seem odd to viewers

of this DVD from outside the UK or Commonwealth. All the colour and pageantry of the parade through St. Andrews is captured and fans of Robbie Burns will be enthralled with the Congress Banquet. But the highlight of this DVD is the address by **George Reid, MSP**, Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, on the topic "*Signs of the New Scotland*." This very interesting address was delivered in an intriguingly captivating style and for this alone this DVD is well worth the UK£10.00 price. See the website www.standrewsmedia.com

Genealogical and Heraldic Sciences

As we eagerly await the publication of the papers presented at the **27th International Congress of Genealogical and Heraldic Sciences** held in St. Andrews in Scotland, the proceedings of this event held in Dublin in 2002 are only now available on CD Rom. The delay in getting these papers published is unfortunate as they provide a valuable corpus of material on genealogy and heraldry. Over the years relatively little academic material has been published in Ireland on either subject which is strange considering the wealth of knowledge available amongst practitioners here. Indeed, there are notable exceptions such as some excellent articles and publications by, amongst others, **Paul Gorry, Seán Murphy, Susan Hood, Máire MacConghaill, Gerard Crotty, Steven ffearry-Smyrl and Dr. Jim Ryan.** In addition, the many contributors to this Society's Journal over the years have also helped to build up this body of material. Certainly there is potentially an immensely important contribution to be made to the furtherance of the study of genealogy and heraldry by those who successfully completed the adult education courses

in genealogy provided by Seán Murphy at **University College Dublin.** In the 1990s the hosting of the **Irish Genealogical Congress** definitely provided both an opportunity and the impetus for the preparation and presentation of important papers on many aspects of Irish genealogy and heraldry and thankfully, these have been published. The organizers of these events, which are sadly no longer held, must be congratulated for providing a valuable and much needed opportunity for the development of a broader knowledge base for genealogy and heraldry in Ireland. However, without events like the Congress the academic development of these subjects is placed in some doubt and indeed, despite individual endeavours, the situation in Ireland could be unfortunately described as rudderless. Indeed, as current legislation stands we cannot look to any remedy emanating from the State or semi-state sector, therefore, until structures as proposed by the **Genealogy & Heraldry Bill, 2006** are in place, other avenues must be explored. An important first step, however, must be the achievement of a broad consensus on the definition of the genealogical

and heraldic sciences and whether they are sciences at all. The latter point has been debated for years and it has been largely resolved in the affirmative especially outside the English speaking world. The two subjects are considered to be part of the social sciences which are generally any discipline or branch of science that deals with the socio-cultural aspects of human behaviour. The social sciences generally include disciplines like cultural anthropology, economics, political science, sociology, criminology and social psychology etc. Recently in a very interesting OpEd piece in **"The Irish Times"** (Nov. 22nd) the Provost of **Trinity College Dublin, Dr. John Hegarty** strongly argued that there is a compelling case to be made for a greater emphasis on the social sciences at national level and for increased public investment in this area. In this respect, it is up to all interested in the sustainable development of genealogy and heraldry in Ireland to ensure that these elements of the social sciences are not overlooked in the formulation of any national plans or policies aimed at furthering the humanities and social sciences in Ireland.

James Scannell Reports....

November began in West Wicklow with the launch of **'The History of the River Slaney'** by **John Duffy** in Ballykealy Manor on Tuesday 7th Nov. The next day, **Pat Power** presented his lecture '5 Lives for 400 Years' to the West Wicklow Historical Society in Horan's, Baltinglass, to mark the 400th anniversary of the founding of Co. Wicklow. This followed later in the month with the launch of **Séamus Grace** of his booklet **'The History of Dunlavin Fire Brigade'** - copies by post, price €5 from Séamus Grace, Dunlavin, Co. Wicklow. On Nov. 25th Baltinglass Library was the venue for the launch of **Paul Gorry's** 380 page book **'The Baltinglass Chronicles 1951- 2001'** pub-

lished by Nonsuch Publishing, price €21.99, which is a study of this west Wicklow town over 150 years and comes complete with 4 town directories - 1851, 1901, 1951 and 2001. All the major players in the town's history and the principal events are covered it and is an excellent town history. On the east side of Co. Wicklow, the Roundwood and District Folklore and Historical Society launched its latest journal. In Bray Co. Wicklow, the Old Bray Society launched on Nov. 15th the 4th volume of their **'Pictorial History of Bray - The Town and its People - Volume 2'**. Compiled by **Henry Cairns and Owen Gallagher**, most of the material for each of these volumes have come

from material held by individuals which has meant that a lot of rare and interesting material not previous seen in the broader public domain is being seen for the first time. It was intended to finish the series with Volume 4 but given the amount of the material that has been lent to the Society, it's likely that a 5th volume will appear next year and after that the amount of material remaining to be published will determine how many more volumes there will be. Copies can be obtained from the Town Hall Bookshop, 25 Florence Road, Bray. Some copies of the other volumes are also available. (**Editor: Many thanks James for your contributions during the year. MM**)

Membership Subscription Renewals Now Due

Membership fee renewals fall due this month for the period January 2007—December 2007. The Board of the Society at its November 2006 meeting conducted the normal annual review of the **Membership Fee** structure and under **Res: 06/11/514** the Board agreed that the following Membership Packages should remain unchanged. **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 publica-

tions 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. Remember you can save time by renewing your membership on line on the GSI website www.familyhistory.ie/shop

New Members are always very welcome whether from home or overseas.

GSI BIENNIAL JOURNAL

The Board apologises for the late publication of the Society's biannual journal which should have been despatched in June. We had problems with our regular printer but new printer has been sourced and the first volume was despatched last month with the second due before mid-January. The Editor is seeking articles so why not preserve your family's story in print in the pages of the journal? Contact the Editor, **Ms. Margaret Conroy, MGSI** at editor@familyhistory.ie

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www.familyhistory.ie/shop**DIARY DATES***Tuesday Dec. 12th 2006 & Jan. 9th 2007***Evening Open Meeting***Dún Laoghaire Senior College
Cumberland Street, Dún Laoghaire
20.00hrs—22.00hrs**Wednesday Jan. 24th & Feb. 28th 2007***Morning Open Meeting***Weir's, Lur. George's St., Dún
Laoghaire
10.30hrs—12.30hrs***NO MORNING MEETING IN DECEMBER***Contribution €3.00 p.p.
(Coffee/Tea included at Morning
Meetings)***New Herald of Arms for Northern Ireland?**

The prospect of a resurgence in the early New Year of a democratically accountable executive in Northern Ireland, after many years of suspension, is greeted with relief and good will by all on the island of Ireland. The people of Northern Ireland of whatever ethnicity or traditional allegiance owe it to themselves and their children to grasp this opportunity to build a bright new future for all. As part of this very positive development, functions and powers will be transferred from London to the locally elected Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly based at Stormont outside Belfast. A programme for government is currently being formulated by the Northern Irish political parties and it will, according to reports, be financially assisted in certain projects for the first time by both the Irish and British governments.

The new Northern Irish ministers will have a full legislative programme and delivery schedule ahead of them, however, some time should be afforded by the new Assembly to consider the timely resolution of a heraldic matter. Currently individuals, institutions and corporate bodies in Northern Ireland wishing to have a Grant of Arms can apply to either Norroy & Ulster King of Arms in London or the Chief Herald of Ireland in Dublin. Indeed, those with Scottish connections can also apply to the Lord Lyon in Edinburgh. To some this arrangement recognises the various allegiances of the population of Northern Ireland i.e. Irish and British or both. However, only coats-of-arms granted by London are officially recognised as the College of Arms in London has jurisdiction for Northern Ireland.

But what of those who wish to identify solely with Northern Ireland and who would not, for whatever reasons, ever consider applying to Dublin or London for a coat-of-arms? In these circumstances, could not a locally based Herald of Arms provide a cross-community service which would be more appropriate to Northern Ireland? If so, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mr. Peter Hain, should be encouraged to petition for Letters Patent to issue granting heraldic jurisdiction for Northern Ireland to the Legislative Assembly in the person of the Speaker of the Assembly. This new heraldic service could be underpinned by appropriate local legislation and include, of course, the mutual recognition of all Grants of Arms made on the island of Ireland. A new "Herald of Arms for Northern Ireland" would allow corporate bodies, institutions and local government bodies to apply for coats-of-arms without offending the sensibilities of either community in their areas of operation and thereby, create and promote sustainable inclusivity and strengthen local identities.

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