

Cumann Seinealais na hÉireann

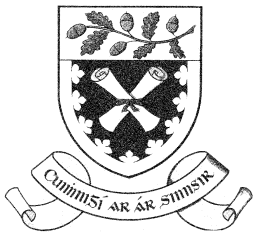
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GENEALOGY
HERALDRY
VEXILLOLOGY
SOCIAL HISTORY
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Public Access to Wills Contested Campaign to Restrict Access to Beneficiaries?

An article in the *Sunday Independent* of July 5th 2009 with the headline '*Ruling sounds death-knell for public access to wills*' has raised fears of an imminent closure of a major resource for genealogy and family history. Citing concerns over privacy and the security of the beneficiaries, the article by **Liam Collins** states that 'a leading Dublin law firm that represents some of Ireland's wealthiest clients campaigned to have details of wills, which were open to public inspection, kept secret from now on.' According to Collins, the President of the High Court, The Hon. Mr. Justice Richard Johnson, had issued a 'practice direction' which overturned a situation which has prevailed for forty-two years and ordered that only 'direct beneficiaries of the will' will have access to the full details from now on. Quoting a solicitor at the firm associated with the 'campaign' to restrict access, Collins clarifies the matter as only pertaining to the information contained in the

'Inland Revenue Affidavit' which raises data protection issues for the living beneficiaries. The article states that following the issuing of the 'practice direction' to the Probate Office that the Inland Revenue Affidavit, which lists details of property and other assets held by the deceased, 'can now only be inspected by people who benefit from a will or a Government official who has a legitimate interest in its contents.' This order came into force, according to Collins, on May 25th 2009. In conclusion, he questions whether this practice direction 'will affect the National Archives, which holds wills after a certain period of time elapses and which contains much research material which up to now has been available for public inspection.' The last statement, in particular, alarmed many genealogists and family historians. However, the information contained on the website of the Irish Courts Service www.courts.ie (updated 25th June 2009) states that 'once a grant of

probate or letters of administration have issued, the original will, the oath and bond, become available for inspection. Copies may be obtained on payment of the appropriate fee by any member of the public - section 42 of the *Succession Act, 1965*. The Probate Office holds the records for grants which have issued within the past 20 years. The records for grants which issued prior to this are held at the National Archives.' Clearly the article by Liam Collins has raised an important and timely matter of public interest, not only for the privacy and security of beneficiaries, but on the continued accessibility of such information held by the State or its agencies. Though, the *Defamation Bill, 2006* will have passed all stages before the Oireachtas rises for the summer recess, if it were to be followed in the autumn by its 'stable-mate' the *Privacy Bill, 2006*, the seeds of a culture of secrecy and fear of litigation will have been firmly sown amongst the custodians of 'public records'.

Minister Rules Out Compensation

On June 17th the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism, Martin Cullen, TD, was asked in two Parliamentary Questions tabled by Mary Upton, TD (Labour) if he would make provision to compensate individuals, bodies corporate and institutions that received or purchased grants of arms during the period April 1943 to May 2005 when the State did not have legislative power to make such grants; and if he will bring forward legislation to amend the *National*

Cultural Institutions Act 1997 regarding all pre-May 2005 grants of arms; if not, what were his views on accepting the *National Cultural Institutions (Amendment) Bill 2008*. In a written reply, the Minister said 'I am unaware of any corporate bodies or individuals, who were granted arms in the period between 1943 and 2005, that have any basis for compensation in respect of the grant of arms made in that period' and that 'the arms were granted and accepted at

the time and continue to be recognised to this day'. However, the Minister did confirm that his Department is preparing legislation which will amend the *National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997* to give effect to the merger of the National Archives, the National Library of Ireland, and the Irish Manuscripts Commission and that 'it will also consider a specific amendment in relation to the arms granted during the period referred to by the Deputy'.

A History of Irish Farming 1750-1950

Most family and local historians like to enhance their studies by understanding the life and times of the periods and people being researched. For genealogists it means that we move on from the simple and rather biblical 'so and so begat so and so' situation to encompass the more interesting life experiences of our ancestors and especially, their living and working environments. Since the overwhelming majority of the Irish population are descended from tenant farming or agricultural labouring stock and this applies to the majority of urban dwellers too, we tend to assume that nothing other than the basic genealogical information, baptisms, marriages and burials etc is available for our family narrative. Indeed, in most cases not even this basic information is available for the period before the Great Famine so we rely on local histories and lore regarding the places associated with our ancestors. But yet again, this may only provide very unconvincing peripheral information that may or may not have actually applied to our own family members. That said, we can be sure that our ancestors derived their basic living from the land as either tenant farmers or agricultural labourers and therefore, this aspect of their daily lives can and should be studied by those seeking a fuller understanding and appreciation of the past. Indeed, a new publication from Four Courts Press - *'A History of Irish Farming, 1750-1950'* by **Jonathan Bell & Mervyn Watson** (ISBN: 978-1-84682-208-7 344pp; Ills. p/bk Catalogue Price: €24.95 Web Price:

€22.45) provides a comprehensive study of rural Ireland and its economy. Though, the title of this volume may not immediately attract the attention of the family or local historian, the contents of this publication should be of interest to any serious study of rural Ireland and its people – our ancestors. The authors were both curators at the renowned Ulster Folk and Transport Museum and this work represents thirty years of research and field work throughout the island of Ireland, especially in the nine counties of Ulster. This very readable volume deals with rural society, farming methods, vernacular architecture, farming implements and machinery, planting techniques, harvesting, threshing and the livestock reared on Irish farms. Each of these aspects of the daily life of rural Ireland is carefully explained and over eighteen chapters, supported by one hundred and twenty-seven figures and seventeen plates, the reader is not only provided with a comprehensive understanding of the development of Irish agriculture, but crucially an appreciation of ingenuity and tenacity of the hard working people who depended entirely on this activity for their livelihoods. The various types of rural housing and farm buildings are explored – the so called 'vernacular architecture' of the countryside from the primitive 'scalp' of the western coastal counties and the slightly more substantial 'bothógai' built for use by people tending cattle on upland pastures during the summer months to the various types of thatched cot-

tages and slated farmhouses. Though, examples of the 'scalp' and 'bothóg' are no longer extant in the Irish countryside, this volume brings home the poverty and hardship experienced by those who called these structures home. Farming implements such as the various types of plough, spade, harrow and roller are explained along with developments in their use over the centuries. The sowing and harvesting of potatoes is of particular importance as it formed the staple diet of the Irish people for centuries. Potato digging machines and the methods used to store potatoes in pits or 'bings' is illustrated along with attempts at controlling diseases of this crop. Haymaking, flax growing, pulling and rippling, and the harvesting and storage of grain are some of the important and often communal tasks explored by the authors. The chapters on animal husbandry are especially interesting as the authors provide many details on the rare native breeds of cattle (*Kerry, Dexter, Irish Longhorn and Moiled*), horse and pony (*Connemara, Kerry Bog Pony, Irish Draught, and the recently extinct Cushendall Pony*), sheep and pigs – the latter includes the intriguingly named '*Irish Greyhound Pig*'. The care and management of poultry is also explored. The final chapter looks at the 'theories and practice of improvements' and the persistence of 'common' practices from the use of tools to cultivation techniques. An extensive bibliography and copious endnotes are provided to assist further research, whether that be purely agricultural research or indeed, genealogical, family or local history research. **MM**

Clare Oral History Project Launched

The unique memories of some of Ireland's oldest citizens are being documented as part of a new initiative. An independent and voluntary group of young history enthusiasts from County Clare has formed *Cuimhneamh an Chláir* - the Clare Oral History and Folklore group - which aims to tell the story of Ireland's Banner County through its oral history and folklore. The group has set about digitally recording, documenting and archiving the memories, experiences, customs, traditions and practices of the county from the local population's own perspective. Cuairteoirí or volunteer recorders have already conducted twenty interviews with Clare's older generation including two 105-year-olds, one of whom passed away just two weeks after her

life story was recorded. The Project has developed a three-year strategy, including an overseas programme aimed at identifying and recording the stories of Clare natives overseas. Commencing in January 2010 it also features Day Care Centre reminiscence projects; a comprehensive oral history collection based on such themes as Ennis Traders and seasonal customs in Clare; and a derelict ruins project where the stories of old ruined houses are illuminated through audio recordings. The group aims to use the material to create an awareness and appreciation for the lore, customs and tradition of Clare by hosting a series of initiatives with community groups, schools and third level institutions etc. Project Co-ordinator Tomás Mac Conmara said that they opted to refer to the volunteer recorders as 'Cuairteoirí' as a conscious reference to the traditional practice of social visiting known as going 'an cuairt'. This

involved, according to Mr. Mac Conmara, 'visiting houses in the locality where stories would be told, and often poems recited, songs sung and music played. As one of the primary aims of *Cuimhneamh an Chláir* is to ensure the continued survival of such traditions we feel it is appropriate to refer to the ancient visiting practice in our work'. Since the formation of *Cuimhneamh an Chláir* in February, members have been invited to make a presentation at the first national Oral History Summer School in the University of Limerick. The group also opened the renowned Kilkee Civic Trust Lecture series last month. *Cuimhneamh an Chláir* is looking to speak with elderly Clare natives who are living in other parts of Ireland and, of course, overseas. The group can be contacted through its website at www.clarememories.ie, or by e-mail at clarememories@eircom.net or by calling Edel Greene on 087-916 5916 (+353.87.916 5916)

Monumental Inscriptions on CD

The ever increasing costs of printing and postage both here in Ireland and in Great Britain has forced many family history societies to review their publication policies and programmes. Some have exited the publication arena completed which is regrettable though, nevertheless completely understandable as costs mount. Therefore, Board of this Society had some hard decisions to make on our own publication programme and it decided to make many of our publications available on CD. Thanks to the hard work of Barry O'Connor and Liam Mac Alasdair, the Society's first publication on CD was launched last month. This new CD contains all three volumes of the **Memorial Inscriptions of Dún Laoghaire Rathdown, Co.**

Dublin, Ireland – Vol. 1 includes the following graveyards:- Barrington's Burial Ground; Blackrock College; Dominican Convent, Dún Laoghaire; Old Glencullen; Kiltiernan Church of Ireland; Loughlinstown; Old Connaught; Rathmichael (Old Church); St. Brigid's Church of Ireland and Tully Graveyard. **Vol. 2** is a special publication on the Friends Burial Ground, Temple Hill, Blackrock and **Vol. 3** contains the following graveyards: Carmelite Monastery; Carrickbrennan Cemetery; Kill of the Grange Cemetery and Sion Hill Cemetery. This CD is fully searchable and easy to use. Normally these three volumes would cost €7.00 each plus postage, however, this new CD has been launched at a *special introductory price* of

just €15.00 including postage. Another new publication of immense assistance to those tracing ancestors in the British forces in Ireland up to 1922 "**Memorial Inscriptions of Military Personnel and Their Families**" is now available at €10.00 including postage. It has been painstakingly researched by Barry O'Connor and his team. To obtain a copy of either publication please send a cheque for the amount required (*made payable to the Society*) to the address (Director of Finance) on the bottom of page 3 of this newsletter. For a full listing of the Society's publications of memorial inscriptions, including other military cemeteries, please see the Society's on-line shop on the website www.familyhistory.ie/shop

James Scannell Reports...

CANOE RETURNED TO CANADA

NUI Galway has agreed to return to the Maliseet community in New Brunswick, Canada, a 180 year old birch-bark canoe said to be the oldest of its type in the world. Known as the 'Grandfather Akwiten Canoe', it was one of three built by the Maliseet Native Americans for British Lieutenant Governor, Sir Howard Douglas, who arrived in 1824 in New Brunswick. The canoe later passed to Lt. Stepney St. George then serving with the British Army in Canada who transported it back to Headford Castle in Co. Galway. In 1852 it was donated to Queen's University, Galway, now the National University of Ireland Galway, by Edward Lombard Hunt, who was a tenant of Headford Castle. For many years the canoe hung from the roof of the university's Quadrangle Building until it was 'rescued' by Dr. Kathryn Moore of the university's Earth and Science Department and sent to Canada for restoration. When it was placed on temporary display in the Canadian Museum of Civilization the Maliseet community became aware of its presence in Canada

and issued an appeal for its permanent return and it will now be repatriated to this community. The community will now focus on the issue of a permanent home for the canoe where it can be placed on public display. The Maliseet or Wolastoqiyik community has expressed its thanks and gratitude to the Irish people for demonstrating their goodwill and respect for this Native American community.

DUDDY PAPERS FOR NUIG

The private papers of Brendan Duddy, secret intermediary between the British Government and the Provisional IRA over a twenty year period in Northern Ireland, have been donated to National University of Ireland, Galway. Sometimes Mr. Duddy used his own house as the venue for secret meetings and acted as the contact between representatives of the Provisional IRA's ruling army council and British MI5 and MI6 intelligence officers and was an intermediary in negotiations aimed at resolving the 1980 and 1981 hunger strikes and played a central role in the efforts to negotiate the 1994

Provisional IRA ceasefire. The papers cover Mr. Duddy's involvement from 1973 to 1993 in efforts to negotiate an end to conflict in Northern Ireland. NUI Galway aims to conduct research with the University of Ulster's International Conflict Centre on the papers with some thirty being assessed and catalogued after which the documents will be recorded digitally and made available to historians and researchers.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROTECTION

On June 24th Mr. John Gormley, T.D., Minister for the Environment, Heritage & Local Government, launched a new code of practice which will improve archaeological protection on major construction sites in Ireland. This new code of practice will also apply to all infrastructure projects such as new motorways, the laying of power lines and the construction of wind farms. These new guidelines were developed jointly by the Electricity Supply Board (ESB), Eirgrid (wind energy company), the Irish Concrete Federation and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Précis of the June Lecture

On Tuesday June 9, 2009 members heard a very interesting lecture on the Student Records of Dublin University (TCD) delivered by **Ms. Ellen O'Flaherty**, Assistant Librarian, Manuscripts Department, TCD. As the oldest university in Ireland, founded in 1592, Trinity College Dublin has records covering over four centuries and many different faculties. From the published 'Alumni Dublinesis 1593-1860' to entrance books, college books, attendance books and many other types of student records. Using these records as a genealogical source largely depends on the information contained in each type of record, sometimes the father's name, address and occupation are listed, however, not

always. Naturally the later the records the more corroborating information exists on the student. Ms. O'Flaherty provided a useful list of sources and explained the public research access policy of her department. Researchers are advised to contact the TCD Manuscripts Department before visiting by e-mail: - mscritps@tcd.ie

GSILECTURE PROGRAMME

Tues. July 14—The [UK] National Archives, Kew by Conor Dodd; **Tues. August 11**—The Records of Glasnevin Cemetery by Mervyn Colville, Dublin Cemeteries Committee; **Tues. September 8**—The National Archives of Ire-

land as a Resource for Genealogy and Local History by Gregory O'Connor, Archivist, NAI; **Tues. October 13**—Research Collections at Dublin City Library and Archive Dr Máire Kennedy, Dublin City Library and Archive; **Tues. November 10**—Researching one family history in Co Wexford by Gaye Conroy, MGSI and **Tues. December 8**—The Bram Stoker family – a typical 19th century Dublin Protestant family. Douglas Appleyard, historian, author and specialist on the author of Dracula If you have any comments, suggestions or queries on the Society lecture programme please contact **Séamus Moriarty**, MGSI by e-mail on Gazette@familyhistory.ie

Membership of the Genealogical Society

Membership fee **renewals fall due in January** each year. The Board of the Society at its November 2008 meeting conducted the normal annual review of the **Membership Fee** structure and under **Res: 08/11/632** the Board adopted the following equalised Membership Package for 2009:- **Ireland & Overseas:** Offering ordinary membership of the Society, Membership Card, voting rights, use of the Society's Archive, monthly newsletter by mail, Annual 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 €40.00 per annum. Therefore, despite tighter economic conditions, there was no increase in the Membership Fee this year. Unlike many other similar organisations faced with the problem of rising costs of printing and postage etc., the Board decided to keep publishing the Society's journal but as an annual publication only. The Membership Fee is now in line

with similar organisations in Ireland. Another new feature introduced was the offer of one year free membership to persons undertaking accredited genealogy courses on the condition that they supply a suitable article for the Society's journal. Also persons under twenty-five years can avail of 50% reduction on the membership fee. Membership can be renewed on-line or, if you prefer, simply download the form and forward it with your remittance to the Society's Director of Finance, **Mr. Denis Ryan**, MGSI, 6, St. Thomas Mead, Mount Merrion, County Dublin, Ireland.

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Board of Directors 2009-2010

Séamus Moriarty (Cathaoirleach : Chairperson); Gerry Hayden (Leas-Chathaoirleach : Vice Chair); Michael Merrigan (General Secretary : Company Secretary); Denis Ryan (Finance); Sharon Bofin (Publications & Membership); Séamus O'Reilly (Archive); Barry O'Connor (Cemetery Projects); Bartosz Kozlowski (Poland) (Internet Services); Pádraic Ingoldsby (National Projects)

DIARY DATES

Tuesday July 14th & Aug. 11th 2009

Evening Open Meeting

Dún Laoghaire College of Further Education
Cumberland Street, Dún Laoghaire
20.00hrs—22.00hrs

Wednesday July 22nd & 26th 2009

Morning Open Meeting

Weir's, Lower George's Street, Dún Laoghaire
10.30hrs—12.30hrs

Contribution €3.00 p.p.

(Coffee/Tea included at Morning Meetings)

JOIN ON-LINE

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www.familyhistory.ie/shop**GSI Board's 100th Meeting**

The 100th meeting of the Board of the Society held on July 2nd 2009 suitably went unnoticed as it was simply business as usual. This was the 100th monthly Board meeting held since incorporation in 2000, however, this pales into insignificance considering the total number of monthly meetings held by the governing body of the Society since its foundation in October 1990. With **Gerry Hayden**, Leas-Chathaoirleach, deputising for the Cathaoirleach who couldn't attend, the Board considered a number of the Society's legislative campaigns along with the ordinary day-to-day running of the organisation. The General Secretary reported on the 1926 Census Campaign and the procedural manner in which **Senator Labhrás Ó Murchú** is pursuing the issue of the *Statistics (Heritage Amendment) Bill* with his colleagues in the Fianna Fáil Parliamentary Party. Though, it was noted that attempts by others to petition An Taoiseach on this issue are continuing, only the introduction of amending legislation can actually facilitate the release to the public of the 1926 Census. The Board also heard of the continued support of **Dr. Mary Upton, TD** (Labour) for the Society's campaign to provide a proper legislative basis for Grants of Arms made by the Chief Heralds of Ireland between 1943 and 2005 along the lines of the *National Cultural Institutions (Amendment) Bill, 2008*, introduced by **Senator Alex White** (Labour). So it was simply business as usual on the Board's 100th—no bubbly, no fanfare, in fact, it was even mentioned.

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Copies of the Society's Journal have been despatched to all Members. The volume number on the Journal should have read Vol. 9 and not Vol. 8 as printed. Further copies may be purchased price €10 plus postage. The front cover photo is of *British Railways FC* (Dún Laoghaire Pier) on April 30, 1949 after losing to *St. Kevin's FC* 4 : 1. BR FC players named on back of photograph.

Tracing Your Irish Ancestors

by John Grenham

Highly recommended by this Society for **EVERYBODY** researching Irish family history at home or overseas.

www.gillmacmillan.ie**1916 Citizens' Memorial**

At the inaugural Seán McDermott Summer School held during June in Kiltyclogher, Co. Leitrim, Dr. Anne Matthews in her lecture on "*Breaking the Silence: The Citizens' Experience of 1916*" called for the erection of a memorial to the 345 Dublin citizens who died during the six-day Rising. Those living in the area around the General Post Office in Sackville Street, as O'Connell Street was then called, found themselves in the middle of a war zone. Dr. Matthews made the point that while the term 'commandeered' was used when rebels took food and 'took it' when taken by the British army, the ordinary people were accused of 'criminal looting' when they attempted to source food - three different terms which covered the same action. She indicated that children suffered special hardship during the Easter Rising as families were confined indoors. Banks and post offices were closed while bakers raised their prices. Dr. Matthews revealed that the rebels took food from the shops and the hotels located on Sackville Street and signed receipts for goods taken from Findlaters (department store). Dr. Matthews urged that a plaque to the civilian casualties of the Easter Rising should be

unveiled in time for the 2016 celebrations marking the Centenary of the Easter Rising. This Summer School was named in honour of Seán Mac Diarmada—one of the signatories of the 1916 *Proclamation of the Irish Republic* who was born in Kiltyclogher in 1884. He was a member of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic and was court-martialed by the British Army and shot by firing squad on May 12, 1916. **James Scannell**

ARCHIVE VOLUNTEERS

The Society's Director of Archival Services, **Séamus O'Reilly, MGSI**, is seeking volunteers to assist with the cataloguing of the collections held at 111, Lower George's Street, Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin—almost diagonally across from the Dún Laoghaire Public Library. There are several collections, including the manuscripts, that require sorting and cataloguing. Volunteers may either contact Séamus by e-mail on jsoreilly@eircom.net in advance of visiting the Archive or simply meet him at the above address on Mondays between 10.30hrs and 16.30hrs (with the exception of Bank Holidays). Whilst, Séamus also facilitates members wishing to access items within the collections for their own research, he would welcome copies of birth briefs and family histories for the Archive.

MOA LAUNCH DELAYED

As reported last month, the Society's Director of Internet Services, **Bartosz Kozlowski, MGSI** (right) has uploaded a Members Only Area (MOA) to the Society's website. But it appears that many members have experienced difficulties in registering for entry to the MOA. Bartosz has now altered the registration requirements to have the 'user name' the same as the member's e-mail address and allowing for the password to be one generated by the member concerned. Last month we also reported on the appointment of a Moderator for the MOA. However, **Sharon Bofin, MGSI** has advised the Board at its July meeting that she will be unable to take on the duties of Moderator of the MOA due to the pressures of work on the membership drive and publications. So until a Moderator is appointed the MOA will not be fully operative. Please accept our apologies for the delay. In the meantime, the Director of Archive Services, **Séamus O'Reilly, MGSI**, in striving to include a catalogue of the archival collections held at the Society's archives in Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. (see *article left*). This will greatly assist members and other researchers wishing to access any of these records, manuscripts and publications. As always, Bartosz welcomes comments and suggestions on the design, layout and content of the current website. Please contact Bartosz Kozlowski with your comments by e-mail on b.k.webdesigner@gmail.com

