

A LETTER FROM IRELAND

VOLUME 1

DECEMBER 2018

THE MAGAZINE FOR GREEN ROOM MEMBERS,
THEIR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS.

JOHN GRENHAM

An Interview with Ireland's
Foremost Genealogist

IRISH PLACENAMES

The Key To Understanding Irish
Placenames

LOOKING
BACK!

Our Favourite
Parts of 2018

A CHRISTMAS LETTER FROM IRELAND

Seasonal Letters
for You To Enjoy

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A WARM IRISH WELCOME

Welcome to the very First Issue of The Letter from Ireland Magazine!

by Mike Collins



Meet The Team -
Left to Right:
Mike Collins,
Carina Collins,
Jayne McGarvey
and Courtney
Bayne.

Céad Míle Fáilte - and you are very welcome to the very first issue of The Letter from Ireland Magazine - our new bi-monthly publication for Green Room Members, their friends and families.

We (the Green Room team) know that you will have lots of fun looking through this special "Irish Christmas" issue - and we have also put links into the Green Room at the end of all articles so you can continue the conversation.

In This Months Magazine.

The inaugural issue is full of seasonal letters, handy hints and tips, shared letters from our members, an interview with John Grenham - as well as plenty of other full-on Irish content.

**Our new publication
for Green Room
members, their
friends and families.**

So, without further ado - we invite you to "flick the pages" - enjoy each of these special Christmas articles and pictures - and be sure to head to the Green Room forum to comment and ask any further questions.

Mike, Carina, Jayne & Courtney.

A CHRISTMAS LETTER FROM IRELAND

Carina Shares Her Christmas Memories as a Child on her Grandparent's Farm

by Carina Collins

What is an Irish Christmas? It's really feeling like Christmas around here in Cork at the moment! People are smiling more and starting to connect again with old friends and family members they may not have seen in a while. Our own son, Evan, returned home from England on Friday night so Christmas has definitely started on a good footing in our house!

Mike asked me the other day about my own memories of Christmas as a child. I grew up in a country shop but also spent a lot of time in my grandparent's farm in rural north County Cork. There were two lovely memories that came to me in remembering Christmas from that time.

The first was the feeling of being on a farm. The feeling of being close to the animals – well, I could have been in Bethlehem itself! Granddad O'Donoghue always made sure that the animals had a little extra food on Christmas eve – it just seemed like the right thing to do. And as we stood outside, we looked up into the dark open sky, hoping to see one star a little brighter than all the others – and granddad always managed to find me one!

Coming down from the animals toward the kitchen door – I remember the glow of a single candle there in the window. A light and symbol of shelter and comfort – and the feeling of home.

In 1997, Mary Robinson – the President of Ireland at the time – started a tradition of lighting a candle in the kitchen window of the Áras an Uachtaráin (the president's residence).



"There will always be room for the night and a welcome in this house"

She did it to signify the connection with all of the people of Irish Heritage and descent throughout the world. She wanted to let all Irish people around the world (whatever your "percentage") know that we are thinking of them – and there will ALWAYS be a welcome here in Ireland.

So, tonight Mike and myself will be lighting a candle in the kitchen window of our own home – a candle of friendship and welcome – for all the readers of A Letter from Ireland. Specially for you.

Wishing you and your family a very Happy Christmas –
Nollaig Shona Duit,

Carina.

Click to Read More Letters in the Green Room Forum here: [BIT.LY/MORELETTERS](https://bit.ly/moreletters)

BILL OF IRISH ANCESTRY RIGHTS

Our Bill of Irish Ancestry Rights -in place since 2015 - Which Is the most Important to You?

AS A PERSON OF IRISH DESCENT I HAVE
THE FOLLOWING RIGHTS:

1. TO KNOW WHICH OF THE SURNAMES IN MY FAMILY TREE ARE IRISH.
2. TO KNOW WHAT EACH OF MY IRISH SURNAMES MEAN AND THEIR POINT OF ORIGIN IN IRELAND.
3. TO KNOW THE SPECIFIC DETAILS OF THE IRISH ANCESTORS IN MY FAMILY TREE AND KNOW WHERE IN IRELAND EACH INDIVIDUAL CAME FROM.
4. TO KNOW WHAT LIFE WAS LIKE FOR MY IRISH ANCESTORS.
5. TO SEE THE PLACES OF MY IRISH ANCESTORS AND TO WALK THEIR LAND AND HOMESTEADS.
6. TO CONNECT WITH MY LIVING IRISH RELATIVES.

Which is The Most Important to you? Click
here to have your say:
BIT.LY/BILLOFANCESTRYRIGHTS

WHEN SANTA CAME TO KILKENNY

by Mike Collins

Carina and Mike head to Kilkenny for a Homelands Feature - and discovered a VERY unexpected final resting place.

Do you remember as a child waking up on Christmas morning? For most of us it was a wondrous time - and maybe you are still lucky to see that wonder in the eyes of your own children or grandchildren? In our house, among the very many preparations for Christmas, there was a focus on getting onto the “nice” list while staying off the “naughty” one.

Now that Carina and myself are older, wiser and just a little more sceptical - we were both delighted and surprised to recently come across the final resting place of old Santa Claus himself!

SAINT NICHOLAS OF COUNTY KILKENNY.

Just last October, we were on the road to County Kilkenny - researching a Homelands feature for one of our Green Room members. We were close to Thomastown when a sign caught our eye: “Newtown Jerpoint: The Lost Town.” Now, that sounded worth a detour!

Inside thirty minutes, we were on a guided tour led by Joe O’Connell - the local farmer who inherited this same “lost city”. This town grew in prominence during medieval times for one very particular reason. Pilgrims arrived from all over Europe to visit what they believed were the remains of Saint Nicholas of Myra - old “Santa Claus” himself!



Saint Nicholas of Myra



How we Think of Santa Today?

"Saint Nicholas is the third most popular subject of icons in the church, with only Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary having more representations."

Joe was kind enough to give us the following background:

"Saint Nicholas was born about 260 AD in what is now Turkey. The poor knew him throughout the land for his generosity, his love for children, and being associated with ships, the sea, and sailors. He was eventually consecrated Bishop of Myra, just miles from his hometown where he died in 343 AD.

Images of St. Nicholas in paintings, icons, statues, collectibles, and stained glass often show him with three bags or balls, symbolising the three bags of gold he tossed through the chimney of the home of a poor man in his village for the daughters' dowry, so they would not be sold as slaves. So he was also seen as the "gift giver".

Over the years, Saint Nicholas became patron of many places and people, and many churches are dedicated to him as well. Saint Nicholas is the third most popular subject of icons in the church, with only Jesus Christ and the blessed Virgin Mary having more representations."

As Joe provided us with this background, we stood in a small graveyard outside a ruined medieval church (called Saint Nicholas's of course). In front of us was a slab depicting the Saint, with two Norman knights at his shoulders. How did his remains end up in this quiet field in the middle of Ireland?



The Final Resting Place of St. Nicholas?

The story goes that following Saint Nicholas's death, his remains were moved to the city of Bari in Italy. It was during the time of the Crusades, and the knights of the time put stock in preserving the relics of saints. One version of the story talks of a family that moved Saint Nicholas's remains from Myra to Bari. These were the Norman "de Frainet" family who held lands around Bari. However, the family were eventually forced to leave Bari and retreated back to their French lands near Nice in the south of France. The de Frainets also held lands near Thomastown in Kilkenny - and Saint Nicholas's remains were eventually moved to the field in which we were standing - a part of inland Europe that was free from the marauding invaders of the time.

Over the following decades and centuries the presence of the remains of Saint Nicholas in these parts became widely known. A whole town grew to service the needs of the accompanying pilgrims. This town - Newtown Jerpoint - thrived into the 1600s, but then went into decline for unknown reasons.

Over the years and centuries - the story of Saint Nicholas has merged with many other myths and stories from around the world and developed into the Santa Claus we know today.

I knew we'd get to see Santa if we waited up long enough!

Click to Read More Letters in the Green Room Forum here: [BIT.LY/MORELETTERS](https://bit.ly/moreletters)

MEET YOUR FELLOW MEMBERS!

Two Pages of Member Meetups, Hooleys and "Drop-ins" from around the World!



1. Brigid Braden in Illinois, USA. 2. Donna Comerford and friend in Newfoundland. 3. Bart Lawless and Sandy Laferriere in Maine. 4. Jack Coffey in Nova Scotia. 5. Barbara Wimble in Sydney. 6. Julie Appleton and husband in Melbourne. 7. Ken Duckett and Sheila Foreman in London. 8. Rob Hepburn, Anne Keating, Brendan Matthews and Johanna Anderson in Skibbereen. 9. Judi & Chris Cooke in Skibbereen



1. Peggy Wilson, Tom Johanson, Emily Dryden, Mary Ellen Trego, Jim Purcell, Julie and Jim Charlton and Emily's dad in Philadelphía. 2. With Pádrai McCoitir in Belfast. 3. Mike Collins (the other one!) in Cork. 4. Courtney, Carina and Jayne in Dublin. 5. Des Dineen and Kathleen Griffis in Baltimore Castle. 6. With Brigid and Mike Braden, Colleen, Cameron and Morgan O'Keefe and friend at Milwaukee Irish Fest.

Click to See More Pictures in the Green Room Forum here: [BIT.LY/MEMBERGALLERY](https://bit.ly/memborgallery)

ASK THE GENEALOGIST

by Jayne McGarvey

Jayne McGarvey is our Irish-based Genealogist in The Green Room. Each week she answers dozens of member queries - here is just one of them!



QUESTION:

I feel like I am going around in circles - and am both exhausted and confused! I have a jumbled pile of notes and dates handed down from my grandparents - but there are so many contradictory dates in there! How do I make sense of it all? Mary Gilgallon. (Notes were also supplied to Jayne).

JAYNE'S REPLY:

Hi Mary, first off, you have a brilliant starting point! While initially this jumble of notes may feel like a pile of jigsaw pieces with no picture - what you have is a gold mine of clues.

The best place to start is by beginning with free online records and then starting to build chunks of the picture that connect to the first bunch of records. I would start with Civil Registration - births, marriages and deaths that are available on Irish Genealogy <https://www.irishgenealogy.ie/en/>

Civil Registration of BMD commenced in Ireland in 1864 with non-catholic marriages commencing a little earlier in 1845. At the moment Irish genealogy have free on line images for births from 1864 to 1916, marriages 1870 to 1941 and deaths for 1878 to 1966 (the rest of the images will appear in chunks over time).

As you build a pile of proven facts about these individuals start timelines for each one and for each family group - each certificate you find will give you time and place for potentially several individuals. For example, a birth registration will give you the child, date and place they were born and the names of both parents including the maiden name of the mother. A death will provide you with the name of the deceased, their marital status when and where they died, and who reported the death.

Start with the vital bmd events you can easily find - then look for additional evidence of marriages or deaths. Then come back and let me know what you have managed to firm up.

I'll then help you with the next set of records to get the next batch of information you need to continue building your picture.

You have a great starting point with lots of great connections - starting by adding some proof to the pudding so to speak will help you move on much more quickly in the long run.

I look forward to hearing more,

Jayne.

Ask The Genealogist Your Questions in the Green Room Forum here: [BIT.LY/ASKJAYNE](https://bit.ly/askjayne)

LOOKING BACK ON 2018 - AND FURTHER!

Mike & Carina share just some of their highlights from 2018 - and even further back!

by Carina & Mike Collins

Inaugural "Green Room Hooley" - Skibbereen, County Cork.

What a great time we had in June, 2017!

More Here: BIT.LY/2017HOOLEY

JUNE
2017



JUNE
2017

Our Inaugural "Member of the Year"

Our very first "Member of the Year" was Jim Purcell from NJ, USA. We even commissioned an epic poem on his behalf!

More Here: BIT.LY/JIMPURCELL

Canada - Ancestral Homelands Trip.

We travelled along the Irish ancestral trail from Newfoundland to Ontario.

More Here: BIT.LY/CANADA150

SEPT
2017



2017/
2018

Member Meetups.

There were so many great member meetups all around the world!

More Here:
BIT.LY/MEMBERMEETUPS

LOOKING BACK - CONTINUED...

Australia - Ancestral Homelands Trip

In March 2018 we hit the Irish Ancestral Trail in Australia

See More Here:
[BIT.LY/AUSTRALIANTRAIL](http://bit.ly/AUSTRALIANTRAIL)

MARCH
2018



AUGUST
2018

Illinois and Wisconsin - Ancestral Homelands Trip.

In August, we did our first US-based Homelands trip - and Milwaukee Irish Fest!

See More Here:
[BIT.LY/ILLINOISANDMORE](http://bit.ly/ILLINOISANDMORE)

COMING IN 2019...

Member Meetups and More:

Make sure you keep in touch with all of our plans through 2019. They include:

- An Ancestral Trail Trip to the North-East of the USA in March.
- Our 2nd Green Room Hooley, Bantry, Ireland, June 2019.
- and Many More Member Meetups!



JUNE 2019

GREEN ROOM HOOLEY

The 2019 Green Room Gathering (Hooley) will be headquartered in the town of Bantry, to the west of County Cork!

BANTRY, COUNTY CORK, IRELAND

Bantry is beautiful small town - at the foot of Bantry Bay and at the head of the Beara Peninsula. As well as great natural beauty, it is surrounded by wonderful historical monuments, beautiful villages, lots of islands and much more.

June 17: Registration | Opening Ceremony | Meet the other Green Room members | Night of Craic, Conversation and music at Ma Murphys.

June 18: Tralibane (just outside Bantry), the homeplace of Chief Francis O'Neil with music and dancing | A unique trip around some very special places and events across Counties Cork and Kerry.

June 19: A circuit of the magical Beara Peninsula with many stops along the way.

June 20: Mannings emporium | Garnish Island | Celtic Ceremony at Bonane Heritage Park | An Irish cottage in the Kerry mountains for a "Homecoming" celebration.

See more about the 2019 Green Room Hooley here: [BIT.LY/2019HOOLEY](https://bit.ly/2019HOOLEY)

PSST! ... HAVE YOU HEARD THE "SPOKEN LETTER FROM IRELAND"?

The Letter from Ireland Show is a Podcast that goes out from our cottage in Ireland – covering Irish stories, myths, family history, surnames and much more! Here are just some of our member favourites so far:

CHRISTMAS IN IRELAND – TALES FROM AN IRISH HOME

Episode 119

MY GRANDFATHER'S HIDDEN HISTORY

Episode 309

A JOURNEY INTO ONE WOMAN'S HIDDEN PAST

Episode 308

THE BEATLES – MEET THE LIVERPOOL IRISH

Episode 307

OUR EXPERIENCES WITH IRISH ANCESTRY DNA

Episode 209

MEET JOHN GRENHAM – A CHAT ABOUT IRISH ANCESTRY RECORDS

Episode 207

And Many More.... Produced by Carina Collins.

See All Available Episode of the
Letter from Ireland Show here:
[BIT.LY/ALFISHOW](https://bit.ly/alfishow)

CARINA'S IRISH CORNER

by Carina Collins

Let's have some fun with Irish Words that we can use here in The Green Room or as we say in Irish "An Seomra Glas" (un showm-ra gloss) - that's Irish for "The Green Room".

I started to learn the Irish language at about the age of 5. One stand-out memory for me was my first trip to the Gaeltacht (gael-tock-t) in county Kerry. For a few summer weeks we were immersed in the Irish language, living with an Irish-speaking family and learning the céilí (kay-lee) dances with lots of boy to choose from! The poor teachers had to keep a close eye on what we all got up to at those céilís!

Nowadays there is an Irish language revival taking place at the local "Gaelscoil" (gael-skull) - a special school where all subjects are taught through the medium of Irish. This is a popular school choice for parents as the class numbers are smaller and all students are very motivated. Even the parents are encouraged to take classes in Irish themselves to help their children. A most unusual sight for us was a recent TV documentary where a young immigrant from Africa who attends her local Gaelscoil was chatting away in Irish...putting the rest of us to shame I can tell you!

We also use proverbs to share a piece of wisdom through Irish. One of my favourite is:

"Ar scáth a chéile a mhairimid". (err scaw a kay-la a var-a-mead) meaning "We live in the shelter of one another".

It is true my friend - for people of Irish ancestry throughout the word - we do share so much in our attitude and values. We truly do "live in the shelter of one another".

Slán go fóil, Carina.



Have a go using the following phrases in The Green Room:

Céad Míle Fáilte (kade meal-a fall-ta).

This means "a hundred thousand welcomes". We don't do things by half in Irish!

Dia Duit (dee-a dwit)!

Literally meaning "God be with you" or "hello"!

Go raibh maith agat (gu rev mah a-gut).

The Irish for "thank you" and is a great way to thank members who have been helpful to you on the Green Room forum.

Slán (slawn).

Which means "Goodbye" - you could use this to sign off at the end of a post OR use...

...slán go fóil (slawn gu foal).
Which means "Bye for now".

Go to the Irish Language and Culture section of The Green Room here:
BIT.LY/IRISHLANGUAGE

ONE MEMBER'S LETTER TO IRELAND

Have you ever wondered what life was like in Ireland at the time your ancestors lived here? Well, this letter directs one of our members towards a unique resource that tells us a lot about Irish life in the olden days through stories and folklore.



My name is Phyllis McNeil and I live in Connecticut, USA. My interest in genealogy grew from a continual pushing by my mother-in-law & father to pursue the family history. Since my initial push, I have been looking into the past for 20 plus years. But I left the Irish side of the family until last; I was told many times that that was a wise move as it was very difficult to pursue Irish ancestry due to destruction and lack of records.

Mike: Nice to meet you, Phyllis. Perhaps it was a wise idea to leave the Irish side until last as you honed those genealogy skills on a more forgiving line of your ancestry!

Phyllis: My mother always loved to tell the story of how she loved to stay over at her grandmother's house on a Saturday night. On Saturday night, Nana Parks would bake Irish soda bread for Sunday morning breakfast.

A View to Hungry Hill from Bere Island, County Cork

Mike: I can smell the bread as you say it! Nothing like fresh soda bread made with buttermilk.

Phyllis: When I began my Irish research, nothing was digitized - I have since found that my Dwyer line were from Cork!

Margaret Dwyer was the daughter of Michael Dwyer & Honora O'Brien. She was born on Bere Island on 20 October 1864 and her brother John was born on 17 February 1862.

Mike: Isn't that great that you have those names, places and dates! Bere island is a very beautiful part of the world. I was taught by two brothers from those parts - Seanie and Barry Hanly and there are still many Hanlys in the area today. Also how interesting that the two names of Dwyer and O'Brien did not come from those parts originally, but out of Clare and Tipperary.

ONE MEMBER'S LETTER TO IRELAND (CONTINUED)

Phyllis: Margaret Dwyer met her future husband when she arrived in the US as a young girl to become a domestic for the Parks family in Bedford, Mass.

In 1892, Margaret married the oldest son (my g-grandfather), George Henry Parks. Their first son George C. Parks was my mother's father & my grandfather.

Mike: It sounds like your Mary was well liked in the Parks family, and especially by George!

Phyllis: I already have a detailed genealogy report for Margaret, her family & the other names in the family (O'Dwyer, O'Sullivan, O'Brien & Meade). I have been working with the Bere Island Heritage Center (who have been wonderful.

Mike: Hard not to have an O'Sullivan surname in that area - it was by far the most dominant name. Of course, you have also hit gold with Riobard - a relation of yours - capturing the main people and events of the island down through the centuries.

Phyllis: I have been to Ireland 4 times. On a trip to Bere Island, I was disappointed not to find gravestones for Margaret's parents who died in 1909. I learned that death was not usually memorialized this way and that many people were just buried in the church yard and sometimes later, if the family had money they would erect a headstone.

Mike: While headstone memorials were not common in the poorer west of Ireland, a stone marker was typically laid in such a manner so that it could be found by a family member. Gravestones were difficult to afford for many until the 1920s with the advent of the Credit Unions. One of the first items that a local would save for was access to a decent burial and a headstone for their family.

Phyllis: I wonder what was life like on Bere Island during the famine & when she was growing up 20 years after the famine?

Mike: Bere Island would have been insulated somewhat from the worst effects of the famine (although that was probably just marginally) given that it was such a large army outpost and coastguard station. It was also opposite one of the main fishing ports in Ireland of Casteltownbere.

However, people like your Margaret still wanted to improve their lot in life - and probably heard positive news from friends and neighbours who had left the area for a new world.



ONE MEMBER'S LETTER TO IRELAND (CONTINUED)

Another aspect of "what life was like" for your Margaret - included the stories, place names and characters that surrounded her. Irish people had a tradition of passing so much down the generations orally - and few of these stories were captured on paper. However, in the 1930s, a project was launched around the country where teachers asked their young students to go home and talk with their older relatives and neighbours to capture some of the stories of their townland or village.

This has resulted in a wonderful folklore archive which has been made available online called "The Schools Collection". Remember, these schoolchildren were gathering stories that reached back centuries - and from people whose living memories reached back to famine times in some cases.

Your own Margaret came from the townland of Ballynakilla on Bere Island - and we have some stories gathered from the National School in that area.

To share just one entry with you (and remembering your families stories of food) - here is part of a story about "Food in Olden Times" by Mary O'Sullivan:



"Long ago, the people ate three meals a day. In the morning, they ate griddle cakes, buttermilk and honey - and for their dinner they ate fish and milk and potatoes and they ate the same for supper".

Now, isn't that special to see those memories captured through the understanding of a child?

So Phyllis, if you want to get a strong flavour of what life was like on Bere Island through the 1800s and into the mid part of the 1900s, then I suggest that you have a look at the Folk Collection from Ballynakilla using the green link box below.

For the rest of our members - you can see the main index of the collection also using the green link box below - and hopefully find your own ancestral location.

Phyllis: Warm Regards from Chilly Connecticut (where the Nor'easters never seem to cease this winter!), Phyllis.

Mike: I hope the weather has improved at this point - and thank you very much for sharing those memories of Margaret Dwyer Parks!

!! This has resulted in a wonderful folklore archive which has been made available online called "The Schools Collection".

See the full version of this letter and
ask your questions here:
[BIT.LY/SCHOOLSCOLLECTION](https://bit.ly/schoolscollection)

Most Irish placenames have been in place for many hundreds - if not thousands - of years. Most were named when Irish was the language in everyday use. Townlands and settlements were names for prominent landmarks like hilltops, rivers, fords and so on. Here are just a few that you may recognise from your own Irish ancestral homelands:

COWS

The cow was at the centre of the Irish farming economy for probably thousands of years. The Irish for Cow is "Bó" - pronounced "Boe" - and guess what we call roads in Irish? "Cow-ways" or "Bóthair" (small roads are often called "Boreens"). This comes across in many placenames such as Boherbue (Boher-bwee).

HILLS

Ireland has a fairly low tree line, and the tops of many of our hills and mountains are visible. The Irish for hill is "Cnoc" - pronounced "Conuck" - which you will often see in placenames as "Knock" - such as Knock, Knockroe, Knocknaheeny and so on.

FORTS

Forts were often built on small hills with good visibility all around, or in other prominent places. The Irish for fort is "Dún" - pronounced "Doon" - and this is contained in the names of plenty of Irish towns and areas, such as Dungannon, Dungarvan, Downpatrick and so on. Smaller forts were called Rath or Lios.

ROCKS

These were often rocky outcrops in the middle of pasture or a bog even. Ideal for meetings or building a fort upon. The Irish for Rock is "Carraig" - pronounced "Carrig" - and you will find this in many placenames such as Carrick-on-Shannon, Carrickmacross, Carrigaline, Carrickfergus. By the way - a rocky fort was called a Caishel - pronounced "Cashel" - sound familiar?

IRISH PLACENAMES

COMMON ORIGINS AND
MEANTING



CHURCHES AND WOODS

Ireland had a monastic and saint tradition from about the 400s. The Irish word "Cill" - pronounced Kill - meant church. Places like Kildare, Killarney, Killkenny all got there names from an association with a saint and their church.

I also mention Wood here - as the Irish for Wood is "Coill" - very close to "Cill", but usually pronounced more like "Kwill". This also appears in many of our placenames - often with a Kil or Cil at the beginning, making it hard to know if it were named after a church or wood. Examples are Killduff, Kylebrack, Clonakilty, Kilgarraff and so on.

TOWNS AND RIVER MOUTHS

I suppose the most recognisable Irish placenames are those starting with "Bally". "Baile" is the Irish for town or home - pronounced Balya - and appears in many of our townland (called Baile in Irish also), villages and town names. Names such as Ballymena, Ballinlough and so on.

Also, the Irish for mouth is "Béal" - pronounced Bale - and this also features in many town and city names that are located at the "mouth" of a river. Names such as Belfast, Ballydehob and Ballina.

BIG AND SMALL

Where you have big hills, big fields, big rocks - you also have small ones. The Irish for small is "Beag" - pronounced "be-yug", and the Irish for big is "Mór" - pronounced "Moor". These words often spring up as "Beg" and "More" in many placenames. Places like Killybegs, Beginish, Ardmore, Lismore and so on.

See the full version of this article and ask your questions here:
[BIT.LY/IRISHPLACENAMES](https://bit.ly/irishplacenames)

IRISH PLACENAMES

COMMON ORIGINS AND MEANING



AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN GRENHAM

by Mike Collins

We caught up recently with John Grenham - Ireland's leading genealogist - for a chat about his own background and the current state of Irish ancestry research resources.

MIKE: What drew you into Irish genealogy in the first place?

JOHN: I was doing a doctorate, and needed a way of making a living that could be picked up and left down at will. A friend was already doing professional genealogy and she suggested it to me. After a bit, I began to really enjoy the buzz of finding things, as well as the worm's-eye view of history that genealogy gives you. I also liked not having a boss. Still do!

MIKE: Your book, "Tracing Your Irish Ancestors" was first published in 1992. In the meantime, you also started your online records and mapping service. Here we are in 2018. How have you seen the landscape of Irish ancestry research change in the meantime?

JOHN: It has to be said that in 1992, research was deeply complicated and almost always frustrating. As a result, Irish records got a very bad name and that reputation even now can be an obstacle. The truth is that, because digitisation happened later in Ireland than elsewhere, we managed to avoid quite a few problems, and Irish research is easier than most other places in the world.

For someone who spent entire days squinting at (and cursing) microfilm, the change has been simply wonderful.

There's been a full-scale revolution. Twenty-four years ago, genealogy in Ireland was deeply disrespected. Then, to Irish professional historians we were cranks and shysters, and in the public eye what we did was pandering to Yanks or (more likely) flogging them dodgy family trees. Now, the digital records produced by genealogy are transforming the study of history, the descendants of Irish emigrants have become part of the Irish nation, and family history is one of the most popular pursuits in the country.

MIKE: What were your most interesting/surprising genealogy discoveries along the way (either for others or in your own family)?

JOHN: There have been a few. The saddest search I ever did was for an eight-year-old child who got separated from the rest of his family on the quayside in Liverpool. They were faced with the choice of staying to find him (and probably dooming the entire family to penury and disease) or leaving. They chose to leave, but the mother spent the rest of her life writing to every public body in England to try to track him, and made her family promise to continue the search after her death. And five generations later, her descendants asked me to try to find him - the pain of that choice was still rippling down the generations.

I did my best, but children like that just vanished like snow in Victorian England.

"There's no doubt that DNA will eventually become an extremely practical tool in getting past the brick wall where documentary records peter out. "



Household numbers by county in Griffith's (1847-64), as on the map

Click on a county to see more detail

Armagh:	2	Belfast city:	1	Carlow:	1	Cavan:	17
Clare:	6	Cork:	695	Cork city:	51	Down:	1
Galway:	3	Kerry:	236	Kilkenny:	2	Limerick:	46
Limerick city:	2	Longford:	1	Louth:	1	Mayo:	1
Meath:	1	Roscommon:	2	Tipperary:	34	Waterford:	18
Westmeath:	1						

MIKE: There are a growing number of people taking DNA tests for ancestry research purposes. How do you see DNA testing and Irish record research overlapping as we move forward?

JOHN: DNA testing tells you how you're related to other people who have taken DNA tests. So there's a potential virtuous circle: the more people take (and share) DNA tests, the more useful they become.

I think there's still a way to go, but there's no doubt that it will eventually become an extremely practical tool in getting past the brick wall where documentary records peter out.

MIKE: We are delighted to offer your comprehensive service at JohnGrenham.com to our Green Room members. What features would you like to add to your service going into the future?

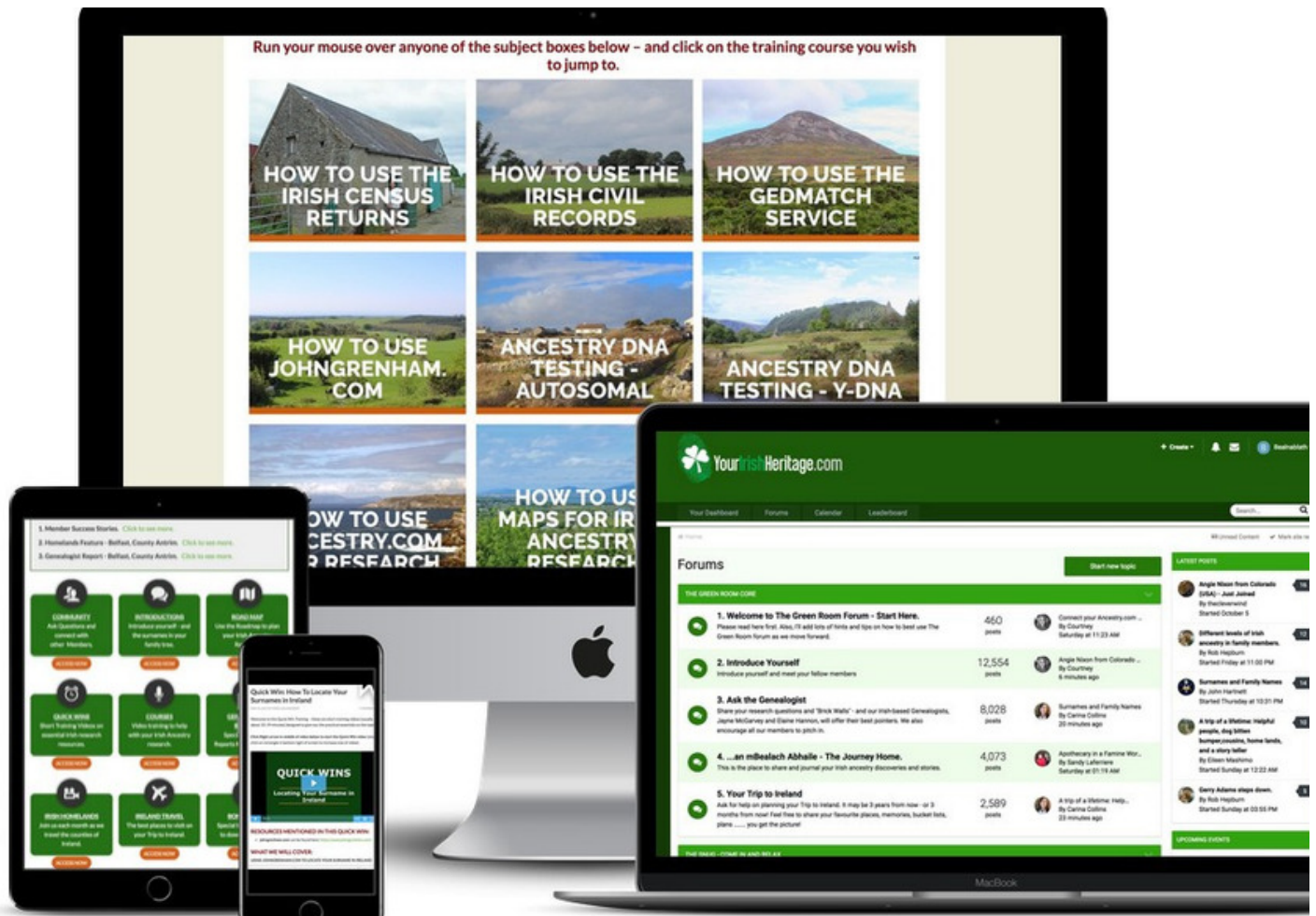
JOHN: I have a list as long as your arm. In the next few weeks, I'll be launching a wizard, a part of the site that walks users through what they know and comes up with suggestions for research. I also want to add a series of visual step-by-step guides to records, see if I can extend the mapping side of the site into the 1901 and 1911 censuses, map multiple surnames and (perhaps) Irish surnames in UK and US records (Mike says: John has achieved much of this by the time this interview was published).

As well as keeping all the record references and listings up to date, of course.

MIKE: Thanks for those answers, John - we very much look forward to using your services for our Irish Ancestry research here in the Green Room!

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