



Tracing Your Roots in NORTH-WEST CONNEMARA

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Introduction

North-West Connemara

Connemara is a region located on Ireland's west coast. It occupies the part of County Galway to the west of the city. Much of the area is located within *an ghaeltacht*. North-West Connemara encompasses the area that surrounds the town of Clifden. It is made up of four parishes, Ballynakill (Letterfrack), Omev (Clifden/Claddaghduff), Ballindoon (Ballyconneely) and Moyrus (Roundstone). It stretches from Leenane in the north to Kilkerrin in the south, and east to Maam Cross. It is bordered to the North by the Twelve Bens and the Maamturk mountains, to the west by the Atlantic Ocean, and to the south and east by greater Connemara.

About The Region

The region is widely regarded as one of the most beautiful and isolated areas in Ireland. In recent times Connemara has become a popular tourist destination. People are attracted to Connemara by the picturesque landscape and rugged isolation. The town of Clifden is at the heart of the region and acts as a centre of commerce for the area.

Up until the creation of the town in the early part of the nineteenth century the region existed in relative isolation from the rest of the country. The establishment of the time thought it "a barren and lawless landscape worth taming". This process was aided with the construction of road and rail links with Galway. These links may have brought the region closer to the rest of the country, but they also facilitated the mass emigration that has been an aspect of life in the area to this day. The reasons for this mass departure are multi-faceted, but the most prominent are the lack of suitable farmland and the subsistence nature of life in the area.

The Purpose of this Publication

This resource is intended to serve as a repository of sources, and a guide to those who wish to trace their family history in the region. Sources vary from easily accessible online records, to more specialized local sources and national archival resources.

Genealogical research is becoming easier and more popular because of the range of resources available to the researcher. The central aim of this booklet is to provide guidance to the researcher as to which of these sources have records relating to the region and are best fit for purpose. The localized sources listed within will help the researcher in finding a tangible link to their ancestor.

Initial Research

Where to begin

Beginning genealogical research can often be a daunting task. It is easy to be put off by the number of resources that are available and it is often difficult to identify a starting point. Beginning your research at home by gathering information from legal documents such as wills or deeds can often provide vital clues to your family's origins.

Start basic and try to procure as much information as possible from family members; it is surprising the amount of information you can pick up that would have previously been unknown to you. Try and collect any physical data that you can: collect letters, photographs, memorial cards and birth, marriage or death certificates. Items such as these can help fill in gaps that exist between your personal knowledge and what is contained in the historical archives.

It is important to go from the known to the unknown. Work backwards through yourself, your parents, and grandparents, and so on. It is also essential to converse with relatives, in particular those from an older generation whose recollections could be of assistance. This may lead you to find unknown relatives who may possess new information, which can provide a vital starting point from which to begin your research.

Creating a family tree will often help to clarify what information you have, where you need to start, and it can help to identify members of the family worth contacting. Information such as place of birth, baptism, age etc should be included in the tree. Leave gaps for unknown members of the family as these can be filled in later. Online software is available to help create your family tree at [Ancestry Family Tree](#).

There are then two avenues down which one could proceed. You could hire a genealogist to complete the research for you; a list of recommended researchers can be found at [Genealogists](#). These companies do not guarantee results, but they do conduct a comprehensive investigation, and more often than not, they do successfully trace your roots. The second method is to complete the research yourself. This resource is intended to give assistance to those who wish to conduct their own research.

Many of the sources here are freely available state records which can be used for any region. Others are more localized; these provide historical information on the region as well as specialised indexes that are otherwise unavailable or difficult to obtain.

Administrative Divisions

In order to make the best use of the resources that are available, it is imperative that the researcher be aware of the various administrative divisions that exist in Ireland today and in the past. Because of the uniqueness of Irish history, various parties have divided the land as they have seen fit. Gaelic divisions such as the townland are still in widespread usage. Both of the predominant churches have parochial structures that remain intact. The major catalysts of division have been the various phases of state control from the Anglo-Normans to the modern Republic. Various governments have divided the state for the purposes of governance and taxation.

When trying to make the best use of the records available, it is imperative that one is aware of what these administrative divisions represent. When conducting research on your own family, it is important that you can link at least one of these divisions with your ancestor.

The Townland

The townland is a uniquely Irish division and one of the oldest in existence. The boundaries of the townland have often been redefined in order to match borders with other divisions.

It is the smallest notable division and is often the one with which people identify themselves. There are c. 64,000 townlands in the entire country. A list of townlands in county Galway can be found at [List of Galway Townlands](#).

Most of the townlands in the Connemara region are relatively small, some only consisting of a few hundred acres. Locating the townland from which your ancestor came from is an important first step. It is worth remembering that even urban areas such as the towns are often divided into distinct townlands. If you only possess the name of a townland, enter it into the *Placenames Database of Ireland* to find more information (<http://www.logainm.ie/>).

The parish

The parish is both an ecclesiastical and a civil unit. Since the sixteenth century the Church of Ireland and the Roman Catholic Church have had two distinct parochial structures. The Church of Ireland retained the medieval parochial divisions, as these correspond almost entirely with the civil parishes used with early tax records maps. The creation of new Catholic parishes in the nineteenth century in response to population shifts means that the Catholic parish structure differs from the civil structure. In modern times however both churches have redrawn their parochial structures to meet shifting populations. So it is worth contacting the relevant clergy member to decipher whether any given church was always located within its current parish.

There are four main parishes in the North-West Connemara region, Omev (Clifden/Cleggan), Ballindoon (Ballyconneely), Moyrus (Roundstone) and Ballynakill (Letterfrack).

For a map of these parishes see Maps Section.

The Barony

From the sixteenth to the end of the nineteenth century the barony was used as an important subdivision in surveys, census, etc. North-West Connemara is located in the barony of Ballynahinch. Knowing this is essential when using many of the sources listed here.

The Poor Law Unions

Under the Irish poor law (1838), the county was divided into Poor Law Unions to facilitate the administration of aid. The Clifden Poor Law Union was relatively large and covered the four parishes of Omey, Ballindoon, Moyrus and Ballynakill. The union is used in virtually all records after its creation and this is vital to remember when consulting most records.

District Electoral Divisions (DED)

Poor Law Unions were in turn subdivided into District Electoral Divisions (DED) for electoral purposes. Census records are numerically arranged by DED. Therefore, before consulting the 1901 and 1911 census returns, you must know in which DED the relevant townland or street is situated.

Ordnance Survey Maps

The Ordnance Survey Office was established in 1824 to carry out a survey of Ireland to update land valuations for land taxation purposes. By 1846, the entire island had been surveyed at a scale of six inches to one mile. Ireland was the first country in the world to be mapped on such a scale.

Learning to read these maps is essential to familiarizing yourself with the region. It also helps to convey a clear picture of what life was like in the area in times gone by.

Ordnance survey maps are available online at <http://www.osi.ie/> and the 1st edition map for County Galway can be found at [Galway Council Maps](#).

Useful Resources

After you have gathered as much information as possible from personal sources, the next step is to consult some key resources that may be of assistance to you. This section will serve as a guide to those resources, their location and how best to make use of them. Some of these are available online. Others require physical examination and are located at national repositories. The National Archives, The National Library and the General Registrars Office all hold important records and should be visited at some stage during your research.

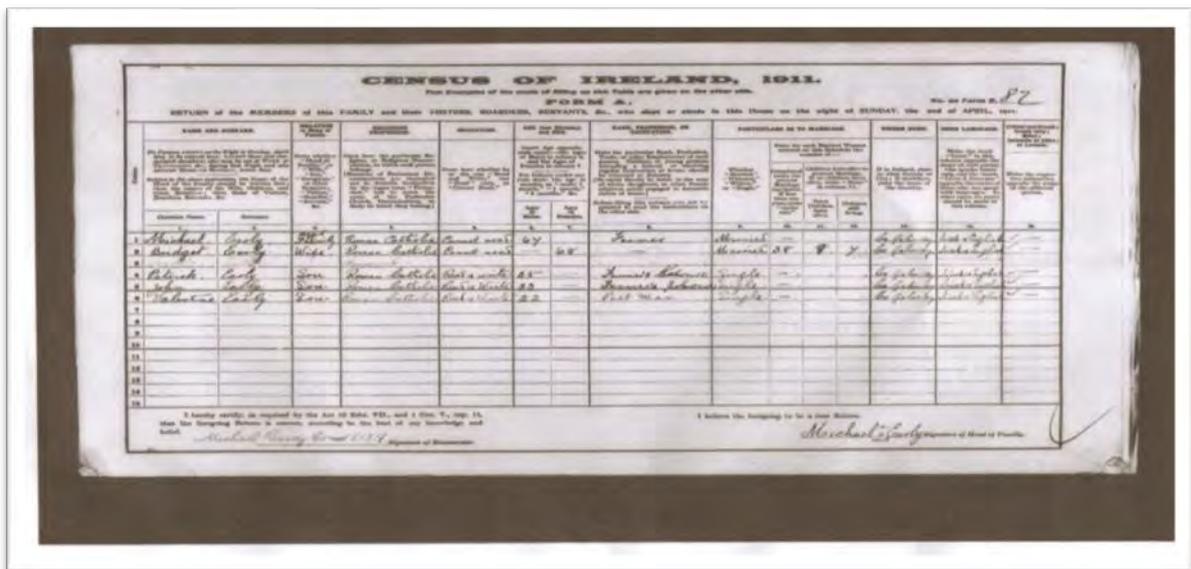
This section outlines the six most important resources that are of assistance to you in your research: the Census, State records, national repositories, Church records, Griffiths Valuation and The Encumbered Estates records.

1) Census 1901/1911

The 1901 and 1911 census are the only intact historical national census that exist on the island. They provide one of the most comprehensive resources available to the researcher. Click [here](#) to explore the census and start your research.

The basic topographical divisions for the census are: County; District Electoral Division; Townland or Street. This is a simple hierarchical structure which makes it easy to access any area in the country. The returns are arranged in clusters by Townland/Street, within District Electoral Division and within the County. Institutions such as barracks, workhouses, hospitals, colleges, orphanages etc., have differing returns to the average household.

The average household return had four parts. **Form A.**, lists all those that were living in the house on the day of the census return. There is one **Form A.**, for each household in the country. The form was filled in and signed by the head of the household. The information sought was: name, age, sex, relationship to head of the household, religion, occupation, marital status, county or country of birth. The census also records an individual's ability to read or write, ability to speak the Irish language and whether deaf, dumb, blind, idiot, imbecile or lunatic.



Form A. of the Census.

The house and building return or **Form B.1.**, provides details on the house in which the given family resided. Records show the number of rooms, number of windows, type of roof and the number of occupants. The records also state whether the house was rented or in the possession of the head of the family.

Form B.1.

The third part of the return was the out-offices and farm-steadings or **Form B.2.**. This form tells you what extra buildings are attached to a dwelling, for example, stables, coach houses, cow houses, dairies, piggeries, barns etc. This form gives an idea of the full extent of a person's property.

B2 Form

The final part of the return was **Form N**. This section listed all of the families in a given townland or street. Using all of the information provided in these returns it is possible to imagine what life was like for your ancestors and what kind of conditions they lived in.

2) Civil/State Records

The various elements of State control in Ireland have all kept a range of records that can be useful to the researcher. These records are today held by the General Registrars Office in Roscommon. The GRO also has a research room on Abbey Street in Dublin.

The General Register's Office (GRO)

The General Register's office is the civil repository for records relating to births, deaths and marriages in the Republic of Ireland. The archive holds records of all births and deaths registered in the whole of Ireland from 1864-1921, all marriages from 1845-1863, excluding those performed by Roman Catholic clergy, and all marriages in Ireland from 1864 to 1921.

They also hold records for:

- Legal Adoptions 1953-present
- Births at sea 1864-1921
- Deaths at sea 1864-1921
- Births/deaths of Irish in UK 1864-1921

The GRO charge search fees for completing your research. For more details please visit [GRO Fees](#). It is possible to apply for any of the records held by the GRO through the Health Service Executive at [Apply Online](#). For detailed information on the GRO visit <http://www.groireland.ie/>.

A map to the GRO can be found at [Google Maps](#)

Contact details

General Register Office, Government Offices, Convent Road, Roscommon

Telephone: +353 (0) 90 6632900

E-mail: Through website at <http://www.groireland.ie/>

3) National Repositories

Visiting these repositories is a time consuming process and requires a great deal of diligence, but it can be very rewarding. Once you get used to whatever system is in place in the given institution the process becomes much easier. The members of staff in the repositories are very helpful and will guide you through the procedure until you are capable of continuing your research alone.

For the purposes of this guide we have selected four repositories that hold a variety of useful records: the National Archives, the Valuation Office, the National Library and the Registry of Deeds/Land Registry. In many cases records can overlap, but each of these institutions holds specific information that can otherwise be difficult to locate.

It is important when you visit these institutions that you document every finding methodically, as often the information only becomes clear when fitted into an overall picture. Many of the older documents can be difficult to read and it is important to take one's time and decipher the exact meaning of the document in question.

Gathering these records allows one to map the life of a given ancestor. This can help to create a clearer and more coherent image of what their life was like and some of the trials and tribulations experienced by them.

A) *The National Archives of Ireland*

The National Archives of Ireland, established on 1st June 1988, took over the functions previously performed by the State Paper Office (1702) and the Public Record Office of Ireland (1867). The purpose of the Archives is to hold records pertaining to the operations of the State and to preserve these for the use of current and future generations.

In relation to genealogy the archives hold several records that may be of benefit. The following are available:

- Census returns - 1901 and 1911
- Tithe Applotment books and the *Primary* (Griffith's) *Valuation*
- Wills and testamentary records
- Ireland-Australia transportation records (1791–1853)
- Estate records
- Parish records and marriage licenses
- Crown and Peace records

The Archives also provide a Genealogy Service to help guide you through the records. For more information on this service please visit <http://www.nationalarchives.ie/genealogy/service.html>.

A map to The National Archives can be found at [Google Maps](#)

Contact details

The National Archives of Ireland, Bishop Street, Dublin 8,

Telephone: + 353 (0)1 407 2300 / Lo-Call + 353 1890 252424

E-mail: Mail@nationalarchives.ie

B) *Valuation Office*

The archive in the Valuation Office holds a list of occupiers of property for the 26 Counties of the Republic of Ireland. Because of the lack of complete records between Griffith's Valuation (1857) and the 1901 census, the records held here provide us with information on individuals and properties during the intervening years.

The following details are held in relation to each property:

- Occupier Name
- Townland
- Address
- Description of Property
- Acreage of Holding
- Rateable value and Reference to its position on a Valuation Map

The Records date back to 1846.

A map to the valuation office can be found at [Google Maps](#)

Contact Details

The Valuations Office, The Irish Life Centre, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1

Telephone: +353 (0) 1 817 1000

E-Mail: info@valoff.ie

Website: www.valoff.ie

C) The National Library of Ireland

The NLI is Ireland's largest public research library. The library is also home to the Genealogical Advisory Service which has full-time staff to guide you through which records will help you trace your roots. The service is opened Monday to Friday 9:30-5:00 and 9:30 -1: 00 on Saturdays. For more information please visit www.nli.ie

The following records are available for North-West Connemara at NLI:

Parish registers

Omey & Ballindoon

- Baptisms 1838-1874
- Marriages 1839-1874

Moyrus

- Baptisms 1853-1873
- Marriages 1852-1880

Ballynakill

- Baptisms 1869-1880

Other Records

- Griffith's Valuation and maps
- Tithes Valuation
- Trade and social directories
- Newspapers
- Estate records

(Note: These records are not complete and gaps do exist.)

A map to the NLI is available at [Google Maps](#)

Contact details

The National Library, Kildare Street, Dublin 2, Ireland

Telephone: +353 (0) 1 603 0200

E-mail: info@nli.ie

Website: www.nli.ie

D) Registry of Deeds

The Registry of Deeds has since 1708 dealt with the registration of title deeds, mortgage documents and other documentation concerning unregistered land. In many cases only disputed records were held, with the Registry as a third party.

A significant number of records for Connemara have been registered here. Because Clifden is a relatively new town many of the property transactions within the town itself were recorded, perhaps to avoid disputes in the future.

There are two methods of search the records held. To begin you must possess either the name of your ancestor or the townland of origin. Using this there are two ways to proceed.

1) Names index

This is an index of the persons who disposed of an interest in property i.e. by way of conveyance, mortgage, lease etc.

2) Townland index

This is an index of all transactions compiled in order of name of townland affected (discontinued in 1946)

An application **Form 11** can be submitted by post to the Registry of Deeds. The records are then searched by a staff member. The fee is €20 per name, for each specified land or premises. Form 11 can be obtained online [HERE](#).

A hand search is carried out by attending the office personally. The fee is €2 per name, or for each specified lands, for each period of ten years or part thereof.

In order to trace any deed the following information is necessary:

- The date of the deed (or nearest estimate)
- Situation of premises

Documents retained in the Registry of Deeds include:

- Memorials 1708-present
- Index of grantors and land index 1708-1946

A map can with directions to the Registry of Deeds and the Land Registry can be found at [Google Maps](#)

Contact Details

The Registry of Deeds, Henrietta Street, Dublin 1, Ireland

Telephone: +353 (0) 1 670 7500

Website: www.irlgov.ie/landreg

As well as the Registry of Deeds there is the nearby Land Registry which possesses records for buildings that are registered with them. Only a small proportion of buildings in Connemara have been registered, but if you are lucky it can provide valuable information.

Contact Details

The Registry of Deeds, Henrietta Street, Dublin 1, Ireland

Telephone: +353 (0) 1 670 7500

Website: www.irlgov.ie/land

4) Griffith's Valuation

The Primary Valuation of Ireland, better known as Griffith's Valuation, was carried out to determine the amount of tax or rates each person should pay towards the support of the poor and destitute within each Poor Law Union. Because so little of the nineteenth century census material has survived, Griffith's Valuation has become in effect a substitute and is invaluable to researchers. The Valuation was carried out between 1848 and 1864; however, as the west of Ireland was one of the first parts to be valued, we can assume the date for Connemara to be circa 1850. Griffith's Valuation is also linked to the 1st edition of the O.S. map. The map reference can be found in the entry and this reference will lead to a location on the map.

The full Valuation is available online at [Valuation](#). It is also available in most libraries (including Clifden). The following details are recorded.

- Occupier name
- Townland
- Valuation of property
- Landlord
- Map Ref

An example of a map linked to Griffith's Valuation can be found [HERE](#). The numbers on the holdings link directly to the number shown on each individual's valuation. However, for Connemara many of the map entries are incorrect and should be cross checked with other sources of information.

5) Church Records

Church records are an important part of any genealogical research. In many cases, records held by the State can have large time lapses and can often be incomplete. The records held by the various Churches can help fill in these lapses and often provide a more comprehensive account of births, marriages etc., as in many cases Church records pre-date those held by the State.

Church of Ireland

The Church of Ireland was the State Church in Ireland until 1869. There was a legal obligation on the Church to keep records from the middle of the seventeenth century. However, many parishes did not keep full records until much later. As a rule, Church of Ireland records start much earlier than Catholic Church records.

Some parish registers can be found in the National Archives and the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland. However the complete collection is available at the Representative Church Body (RCB) Library. For more information please visit [RCB](#).

The Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church also kept extensive records relating to their parishioners. When researching these records, awareness of the differing parish structures is important. Roman Catholic parishes are often made up of more than one civil parish. Usually, due to expansion of certain parishes, Catholic parishes contain more than one Church, so often it is wise to consult the local clergy member as to where the records you seek are stored. The records pertaining to the parishes in North-West Connemara are held by the National Library (as listed above) and the Church of Latter Day Saints.

Presbyterian Church Records

Most Presbyterian congregations are located in and around the province of Ulster, and as a result the majority of the churches records are held by the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). Records held by the PRONI are discussed in detail later on. Also many of the churches records are held by the [Presbyterian Historical Society](#).

Jewish Community Records

The Irish Jewish Genealogical Society & Family History Centre is a division of the Irish Jewish Museum. The Centre maintains a database of 39,500 entries that may be viewed at the National Library of Ireland, the National Museum of Ireland and the Irish Jewish Museum. For more information visit [Shalomireland](#).

Baptist Church Records

The records of the Baptist community in Ireland are held by the PRONI and the Irish Baptist Historical Society, Belfast.

The Society of Friends or Quakers

The Society of Friends in Ireland has been keeping records since the seventeenth century. Transcribed registers of births, deaths and marriages are held by the [Dublin Friends Historical Library](#). These records are also held on microfilm by the National Library.

Huguenot Society of Great Britain & Ireland

Records relating to Irelands Huguenot community are held by [The Huguenot Society of Great Britain & Ireland](#) which is based in London.

The Church of Latter-Day Saints (LDS)

The church itself does not have a community present on this island. However, from 1948 onwards the Church of Latter-Day Saints or Mormons began collecting records on births, marriages and deaths in Ireland. They have the largest collection of genealogical material in the world with over a billion records. From Ireland they have a collection containing:

- Births indexes 1864-1959
- Births Registers 1864-1880 & 1900-1913
- Death registers 1864-1870
- Marriage indexes 1845-1870
- Death indexes 1864-1959

Many of these records are available online at <https://www.familysearch.org/>. Included in the online resources are the records from all of the parishes in North-West Connemara. Because these records are international, it is possible to find information on people who were born in Connemara, but married or died elsewhere. The Church also holds records for most of the aforementioned denominations.

6) Encumbered Estate Records

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the vast majority of the population lived as small tenant farmers on large estates, owned for the most part by English or Anglo-Irish landlords.

The administration of these estates inevitably produced large quantities of records, maps, tenants' lists, rentals, account books, lease books etc. Over the course of the twentieth century, as the estates have been broken up and sold off, many collections of these records have found their way into public repositories, and constitute a largely unexplored source of genealogical information.

The records for the estates in Connemara are some of the best preserved and most comprehensive sources of information available. Because the Great Famine caused widespread devastation, many of the long established estates in the region had to be sold. The Encumbered Estates Court was set up to facilitate the sale of insolvent landed estates. An evaluation of the estates was drawn up for the courts and this included an estate rental. These provide a comprehensive picture of the region in the post Famine years.

A rental was compiled for the two major estates in North-West Connemara the Martin Estate in 1852 (Ballynahinch) and the D'Arcy Estate (Clifden) in 1850. The D'Arcy estate later became the Eyre estate. There was also a small estate in Kylemore owned by the Duncan family.

The records of the D'Arcy and Martin estate are available in the National Library, the National Archives, Galway University Library and the Galway County Library at Island House. For more information on these records and where they are held please visit <http://www.landedestates.ie/>.

The Estate records contain the following information:

- Tenant's name
- Denomination(townland)
- Quantity of Land
- Yearly rent
- Gale days(Days of rent payment)
- Tenure of tenants
- Observations and descriptive notes

While the Martin and D'Arcy Estates may have been the largest, they were by no means the only estates held in the region. The Landed Estates website mentioned above is an initiative by the National University in Galway to explore these estates and serve as a guide to finding archival information. The information catalogued on the website is an invaluable guide to locating where the information is stored.

The estates below are some of the major ones in the region. If you require information on any other estate use the search tool on the landed estate website.

[Martin Estate](#)

[D'Arcy Estate](#)

[Eyre Estate \(Formally D'Arcy Estate\)](#)

[Duncan Estate](#)

[Geoghegan/O'Neill \(Bunowen\)](#)

[Browne \(Rosleague\)](#)

[O'Flaherty \(Renvyle\)](#)

[Blake \(Renvyle\)](#)

[Frewen \(Formally D'Arcy Estate\)](#)

[Law Life Assurance Society \(Formally Martin Estate\)](#)

[Twining \(Cleggan\)](#)

Local Sources

After you have obtained all of the records at a national level, the next step is to see what can be discovered about your ancestor at a local level. The goal of this should be to perhaps find physical evidence of your ancestor; this could take the form of a grave, a house, or simply to see the area where they lived and learn about what life would have been like for them.

Even if one does not find something tangible, learning what the area was like during the lifetime of your ancestor can often be very rewarding and informative.

The Galway Family History Society (West) Ltd

This is a genealogical project helping people trace their ancestry. The Galway Family History Society offers a full genealogical service for West County Galway and included in this is the entire Connemara region. This is a fee paying service and consultations are by appointment only.

Contact Details

Galway Family History Society, St Joseph's Community Centre, Ashe Road, Shantalla, Galway City, Ireland

Telephone+353 (0)91 86 0464

Email: galwaywestroots@eircom.net

Website: www.rootsireland.ie

Galway County Library

The following resources are held in the library:

A comprehensive collection of [old local newspapers](#)

Griffith's Valuation for Galway on microfilm

Trade Directories

- Pigot's Directory for the years 1820, 1821, 1822 and 1824
- Slater's Directory of Ireland for the years 1846, 1856, 1870, 1881 and 1894
- Thom's Directory for 1848

Local maps

Historical photographs of Galway

The 1901 and 1911 census on microfilm

Contact Details

Galway County Library, St Augustine Street, Galway City, Galway

Telephone: +353 (0) 91 561666

E-mail: info@galwaylibrary.ie

Graveyards & dates of usage (Roman Catholic)

This section is not divided by parish. Instead each church is listed with its own graveyard(s).

- Clifden

The oldest graveyard for the town of Clifden is located within the churchyard of St Mary's chapel (1820-1879). Directions are available at [Google Maps](#).

The present day graveyard for Clifden is located in Ardbear. Directions are available at [Google Maps](#). The dates of usage are not exact and both graveyards were used throughout the nineteenth century.

- Ballyconneely

The new graveyard in Ballyconneely has been in use since 1967 and it is located behind the National School in the centre of the village ([Google Maps](#)). Previous to that, the old graveyard was used. This graveyard is located about 2km south of the village. Directions are available at [Google Maps](#)

- Letterfrack/Renvyle

The graveyard in Renvyle is located near the castle ([Google Maps](#)). There is a graveyard located in Toorena on the Lettergesh Road ([Google Maps](#)). There is also a graveyard located near the Ballynakill church on the road to Cleggan ([Google Maps](#)) and another in Banouge on the Clifden road at ([Google Maps](#)).

- Claddaghduff

The main graveyard in Claddaghduff is located on Omev Island. The island is tidal and is only accessible by land only when the tide is out. It is worth consulting locally before travelling ([Google Maps](#)).

- Roundstone & Cashel

The main graveyard for the village of Roundstone is on the Ballyconneely road at Gurteen ([Google Maps](#)). A second graveyard is located to the east of the village in Toombeola ([Google Maps](#)). The graveyard in Cashel is located behind the R.C. Church ([Google Maps](#)).

There are also two graveyards in Ballinafad which service the Recess area. The oldest graveyard located beside the Church ([Google Maps](#)), while the new graveyard is located about half a kilometer away ([Google Maps](#)).

- Carna & Kilkerrin

There are two main graveyards that service the village of Carna. The graveyard in Moyrus is used mainly by those from the townlands to the west of the village ([Google Maps](#)). The burial ground on Mweenish Island is used for the village itself and townlands to the east. It is accessible by bridge ([Google Maps](#)).

The burial ground in Kilkerrin is situated in the village on the Carna Road ([Google Maps](#)).

Graveyards (Church of Ireland)

The following are the Church of Ireland graveyards located within the parish of Omey (Clifden). The dates given are the approximate dates of opening. A map link is also given where possible.

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|-----------------------|--------------|---|
| • Sellerna (Cleggan) | Opened: 1853 | Directions: Google Maps | • Moyrus Roundstone | Opened: 1840 | Directions: Google Maps |
| Opened: 1858 | Directions: Google Maps | | • Ballynahinch | Opened: 1864 | Directions: Google Maps |
| • Renvyle | Opened: 1849 | Directions: Google Maps | • Errislannan | Opened: 1824 | Directions: Google Maps |
| Opened: 1858 | Directions: Google Maps | | • Ballinakil (Moyard) | Opened: 1791 | Directions: Google Maps |
| • Ballyconneely/Errismore | | | | | |
| Opened: 1849 | Directions: Google Maps | | | | |
| • Clifden | | | | | |
| Opened: 1841 | Directions: Google Maps | | | | |
| • Moyrus Beauchamp | | | | | |

A comprehensive guide to all graveyards is available at [Google Books](#).

Graveyard mapping

Galway County Council is currently involved in a project to digitally map the graveyards in the area. The project is ongoing. For details feel free to contact the counties heritage officer Marie Mannion. (mmannion@galwaycoco.ie)

Local clergy contact details

Area	Clergy Member	Telephone	E-mail
Letterfrack (Ballinakil)	Fr Gerard Burns PP	095-41053.	ballinakilparish@eircom.net
Clifden	Fr James Ronayne P.P.	095-21251,	clifdenparish@eircom.net
Ballyconneely	Fr John Dunleavy	095-23541	N/A
Claddaghduff	Fr Anthony Neville	095-44668	N/A
Roundstone	Fr Jarlath Heraty	095 35846	N/A
Omey(Clifden) Church of Ireland	Very Rev DL Sandes	095 21147	revddsandes@gmail.com

Clifden Library

The Clifden Library has a collection of local publications that could help you locate information on your ancestor. The Librarian will provide also assistance and perhaps put you in contact with individuals who may be of help to you in your quest.

Contact details:

Clifden, Main Street, Clifden, Co. Galway

Telephone: +353 (0) 95 21092

Email: clifden@galwaylibrary.ie

Literary Sources

There have been several books written on the history of the area in recent years. These publications provide not only an interesting insight into what life was like in the region in the past, but also, a number of them have indexes that contain valuable lists and sources that are not freely available or may be difficult to find.

Kathleen Villiers-Tuthill is a local historian and writer whose publications provide a valuable insight into the history of the region. Many of her publications contain otherwise unavailable, or difficult to locate, lists of individuals associated with the region. Below are some of her works that may be of interest to those researching the region. They are available for purchase at <http://www.connemara-girl-publications.com>.

Alexander Nimmo & the Western District: By Kathleen Villiers-Tuthill

Alexander Nimmo was responsible for creating the transport infrastructure that shapes the western part of Connacht today. This book tells the story of the man himself as well as the region both before his arrival and what it became subsequently.

Beyond The Twelve: Bens a History of the Town of Clifden & District 1860-1923

In the years after the Famine, Clifden and the surrounding region was a much changed place. This book tells the story of the town's recovery from the Great Famine and evolution up to Irish independence in the early part of the twentieth century.

History of Clifden: 1810-1860

The story of Connemara in the early part of the nineteenth century was shaped by the story of the town of Clifden. The town was built with the goal of civilizing this wild landscape. The construction of the town was largely the work of one man. John D'Arcy was born in Galway but came to make Connemara his home. He dedicated his entire life to creating a town in the region. The story of early Clifden is in effect his and the entire regions story.

History of Kylemore Abbey & Castle

What is now Kylemore Abbey, home to the Benedictine Nuns, was originally Kylemore castle, built by Manchester born merchant and MP Mitchell Henry. Constructed in 1872 Kylemore has played an important part in the parish of Ballynakill ever since. The book looks at its history as well as providing information on locals who were associated with the Castle come Abbey.

Patient Endurance: The Great Famine in Connemara

During the Great Famine Connemara lost approximately one third of its population to starvation, disease and emigration. This book explores this cataclysmic event and how it affected the region and its inhabitants. It is a harrowing tale of pain and suffering, but it is essential reading to understand these events and how they shaped a people.

The Connemara Railway: By Kathleen Villiers-Tuthill.

This book provides a concise and readable history of the short lived Connemara Railway. The book is full of interesting information and contains useful lists of those who worked on the railway which was one of the few sources of employment in the region at the time.

Other local publications

There have been other publications which document the region's history and provide valuable information.

Soupers & Jumpers: the Protestant Missions in Connemara: By Miriam Moffitt

This publication gives an excellent account of the Protestant missionaries who came to Connemara during the Famine and its aftermath. Many of those assisted and involved with the Irish Church Mission Society. The book is available from [History Press Ireland](#).

The Cleggan Bay Disaster: By Marie Feeney

In 1927 twenty-five fishermen were killed in one of the greatest tragedies to befall this isolated community. This book gives an account of the disaster itself, as well as the effect this had on the community. Because of the small population of the area almost every family was affected to some degree and this book tells their story. The book is available to purchase at [Amazon](#)

The Way it was: By Paul Gannon

This publication is an excellent compilation of first-hand accounts of what life was like in North-West Connemara in years gone by. It gives an excellent insight into some of the characters and their stories. An interesting and insightful read. Available to purchase at [Alibris.co.uk](#)

To School through the Years: A Local History of the People and Schools of the Claddaghduff Area 1853-2003

Written to celebrate 150 years the Claddaghduff National School, this book is full of stories and pictures of those who passed through the school. It provides a history of the village and its inhabitants. It is available to purchase at [Amazon](#)

James & Mary Ellis Background and Famine Relief in Letterrack: By Joan Johnson

Written by Joan Johnson, the book tells the story of why James and Mary Ellis, a Quaker couple from Bradford in the North of England, came to Letterrack in the West of Ireland, during the Great Famine. James Ellis retired from a very successful business, and became a resident landlord in Letterrack in 1849. The book tells their story as well as the story of the inhabitants of the area. It is available for purchase at [Amazon](#)

Historical Sketchbook- Listed Buildings of Connemara: By Brendan O' Scanail

This book covers the history of buildings from various parts of Connemara both north and south. It is significant as it highlights the fact that there are protected structures throughout the county and the region. It gives the reader a means to discover and learn about some of the most important structures in the region. Available at the Clifden Bookshop or by e-mailing ellen@blackturfpublishing.com.

Theses and Dissertations.

Both NUIG and GMIT students have completed academic dissertations and theses on local history. Many of these can contain information which may be of use to the researcher. The links below allow you search the library catalogues of each institution.

[NUIG Library Catalogue](#)

[GMIT Library Catalogue](#)

Other Important Resources

Many other resources are worth considering, in particular if your search leads you away from the Connemara region to other parts of the country or indeed abroad, or if you require outside assistance in your research. In this section these will be discussed as regards their use and access.

The Public Records Office of Northern Ireland

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) has a programme of digitizing significant archives to make them accessible to the public online.

Online archives are fully searchable. When you find an entry you are interested in, you can then view a digital image of the original document. The following are currently available at <http://www.proni.gov.uk>:

As mentioned previously the PRONI hold many Church records for non-Catholic denominations.

The National Archives UK

The UK National Archives are useful for those researching people who may have immigrated to the UK. Also, records are kept on military personnel and public servants. The following records are kept at [National Archives](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)

- Census UK 1841-1911
- Births, deaths and marriages 1837-present
- Army, navy and marines 1793-present
- Records on public servants, criminals and merchant seamen

Archival records for Scotland and Australia can be found at the following links, [Scotland](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/scotland) and [Australia](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.au).

Ancestry.com/Ancestry.co.uk

One of the largest repositories of genealogical information on the Internet, with over 2 billion names stored. Although mainly concerned with the US and UK respectively, records are kept on Irish emigrants entering those countries. It also offers *Family Tree Maker*, the most popular genealogy software program in the world. To view these sites click [Here](#).

Irishorigins.com

Irish Origins offers many valuable collections of Irish genealogical material online including an 1851 census of Dublin City; Tithe Defaulters 1831, an index of Irish wills pre 1958 and various other sources. As a subscriber you can search and view the collection in full at <http://www.irishorigins.com/>.

Eneclann

Eneclann is an Irish based family history firm; they are the largest company of this nature in the state. They publish a great deal of material on genealogy, and are involved in the digitalization of various databases which are available for a fee at Irish Origins. <http://www.eneclann.ie/>

Rootsireland.ie

Roots Ireland is a website run by the Irish Family History Foundation. They keep digitized records which are available for a fee on their website <http://www.rootsireland.ie>. The records include:

- Parish registers
- Civil records (births, deaths & marriages)
- Gravestone inscriptions
- Griffith's Valuation
- Census records

Ellis Island passenger list

A list of Irish passengers that travelled through Ellis Island is available at www.ellisland.org. As well as providing information on the passengers they also offer a service where for a fee they provide exact copies of the documents kept at immigration.

Irish Times

The *Irish Times* is a national newspaper which provides an online guide to completing genealogical research in Ireland. The guide is very useful and provides a step-by-step walkthrough guide. This is done in partnership with Eneclann and is available at <http://www.irishtimes.com/ancestor/research/>

Occupational Records

During the 19th century much of the population of North-West Connemara came from the landless labourers or small tenant farmer class. Because of this, records on these individuals can often be difficult to find.

However, occupational records do exist for many professionals and can be very helpful in understanding more about your ancestor. A comprehensive list of records and where to find them is available at [Occupational Records](#).

Case Studies

The aim of this section is to explain in a practical sense how these resources can be used to explore the history of people and the buildings which they occupy. The records kept are not just empty facts collected and tied together- they can tell a story, using easily available resources such as the online censuses, civil records, and church records. Searching records for individuals who held business or owned substantial property, is often much easier than locating information on poorer rural dwellers as we can see from the two examples below.

Stanley/Griffin Family



This section is a sample research into the history of the Stanley family of Market Street, Clifden. The family run a clothing shop in the town and have been in possession of this business for a considerable period. This section will explain how the previously mentioned resources can be used to tell the story of a given family.

We will explore the family generation by generation, encountering various resources as we move backwards.

1st Generation

The current proprietor of the family business is John Stanley. In researching family history it is important to move from the known to the unknown. The next logical step is to move to John's father Percy who passed away in 1999. A visit to the graveyards can often be useful in exploring relatively recent generations. From Percy's gravestone in Ardbear Graveyard we can see that he was born in 1913.

2nd Generation

From a visit to the same graveyard we also find the grave of Percy's parents Robert Gerald Stanley (1882-1972) and his wife Sabina (1884-1961) whose maiden name was Loftus. Interestingly, the grave also contained a memorial to two of Percy's siblings: his brother Paddy who was lost at sea on the 11th of November 1942 during WW2 and his sister Martha who died while serving with the Medical Missionaries of Mary in Lagos, Nigeria on the 18th of July 1971.

The next step is to consult the 1901/1911 census. In 1911, Robert Gerald and Sabina are running the drapery and don't have any children and they are aged 29 and 27 respectively. We also see that Sabina was originally from Co. Mayo. The house is also home to six employees of the business, four from Co. Galway and one each from Mayo and Sligo.

In the 1901 census we find Robert Gerald as a single man aged 15. The ages contained within the census should not be taken as fact however, as we can see here that over a period of ten years Robert Gerald has aged from

fifteen to twenty-nine. What is interesting about the 1901 census is that the head of the Household is Robert Gerald's mother Margret Ann Stanley.



(A Billhead featuring Margret-Ann's Name from 1881)

3rd Generation

Consulting Church records at the GRO uncovers Margret-Ann's maiden name, which was Griffin. Margret Ann married a Robert Samuel Stanley whose origin or date of birth could not be uncovered during the course of this research. From the Church records we discover that Margret-Ann was born in 1862 and passed away in 1904.

4th Generation

Next step is to consult Griffith's Valuation and maps to see who was in ownership of the property at the time. The records show that the property was in the ownership of a John Griffin, so we can surmise from this that John Griffin is Margret-Ann's father. Cross referencing this with Church records validates this. A trip to the Registry of Deeds uncovers a will by John's wife Honoria; from this document it is clear that John has already passed on as the document is dated 19th January 1880.

47	John Joyce,	Same,	House,	—	—	0 15 0	0 15 0
48	John Flynn,	Thomas Eyre,	House,	—	—	0 5 0	0 5 0
49	Patrick Walsh,	Same,	House,	—	—	0 15 0	0 15 0
50	Patrick Nee,	Same,	House,	—	—	0 15 0	0 15 0
51	Francis Mullen,	Same,	House and yard,	—	—	3 0 0	3 0 0
52	Francis Mullen,	Same,	House and yard,	—	—	3 10 0	3 10 0
53	Michael Lee,	Same,	House and yard,	—	—	3 0 0	3 0 0
54	Catherine Dowd,	Same,	House,	—	—	2 0 0	2 0 0
55	John Corbett,	Same,	House,	—	—	3 10 0	3 10 0
56	John Griffin,	Same,	House and yard,	—	—	10 10 0	10 10 0

(Extract from Griffith's Valuation)

5th Generation

The next step was to consult The Encumbered Estate Records. This showed that the Griffin lease was taken out from John D'arcy on the 19th of August 1825. Using this date it was possible to find the lease for the building in the Registry of Deeds. The lease was taken out by a James Griffin who is married to a Mary O'Dowd and has a son named John. So from this new piece of information we can say that John's date of birth was pre 1825.

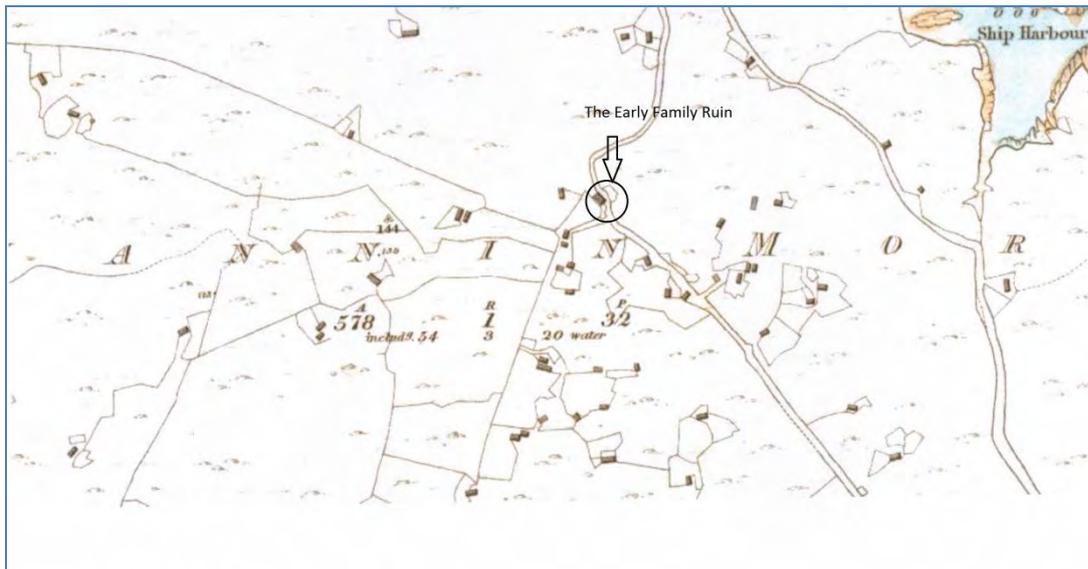
6th Generation

Finally the last piece of information uncovered during this research was a deed of settlement in The Registry of Deeds by James Griffin. Contained within this is details that James' wife Mary, who was the daughter of a Roger O'Dowd, brought a £300 dowry into the marriage.

The last name uncovered is Roger O'Dowd, who is the great-great-great-great-great-grandfather of John Stanley. While the entire family has not been explored fully and there is room for a lot more research it has been possible to trace back seven generations from the present using the resources contained within this booklet.

It is worth noting that because the Stanley/Griffin family owned a large business within the town of Clifden, information pertaining to their members was more plentiful and easier to locate. Often, families from rural areas who did not own property information can be more difficult to locate.

The Early/Flaherty Ruins in Manninmore



This research is based on a rural ruin in the townland of Manninmore that is currently a shed, located on land owned by Malachy Nee. Manninmore is located about 10Km south of Clifden to the south of Mannin Bay. To begin your research, it is imperative to contact the current owner of the land to extract any useful information. The first step in the process was to explore the deeds of the land held by the current owner Malachy Nee.

From this, we can establish that Malachy Nee inherited the ruin from his mother Anne-Maria Nee (nee Early) in 1996. Mrs. Nee had inherited the land and ruin from her father Valentine Early in 1959. The church records show that Valentine was interred in Ballyconneely Cemetery in 1967.

The next step was to make contact with Anne-Maria who is currently living in Clifden. She stated that the current ruin was originally the family home where her father Valentine was born and raised.

The census returns for 1901 and 1911 reveal much about this family. In the 1901 census Valentine is aged 12, a scholar, able to read and write, and speak both English and Irish. He lives with his father Michael, his mother Bridget (nee Flaherty), and siblings Pat, Martin, John, Anne and Bridget. The outhouses include a stable, a cowshed, piggery and potato house.

In 1911 Valentine, aged 22 has become a postman. A fowl house and extra shed have been added to the dwelling. By 1911, much of the family had emigrated or married, with only Valentine and his brother John remaining. It appears that John emigrated in the years after and only Valentine remained in Manninmore and inherited the land and house.

Michael Early held the house and land on a lease from his landlord Dominick E. Browne. When the Land Commission divided the land between the tenants, Michael's holding was increased. From a visit to the Valuation office we can

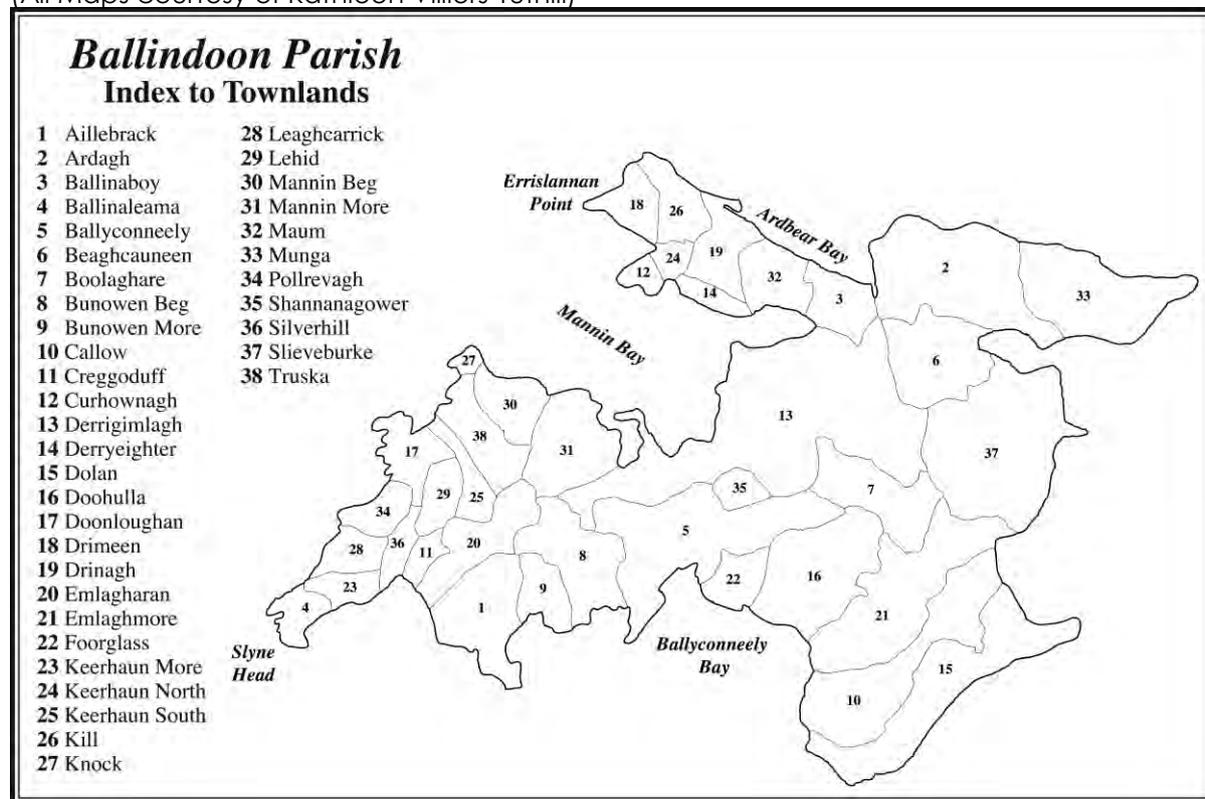
uncover that the previous owner of the property was a Patrick Flaherty, and from the Church records in Ballyconneely we find that Patrick was in fact Bridget's (Michael's wife) father. The research finished at this point; it covered five generations from Malachy Nee to Patrick Flaherty. Because people in rural areas often moved holding it can often be difficult to track them. In this case Patrick seems to be the first member of this particular family to hold the land.

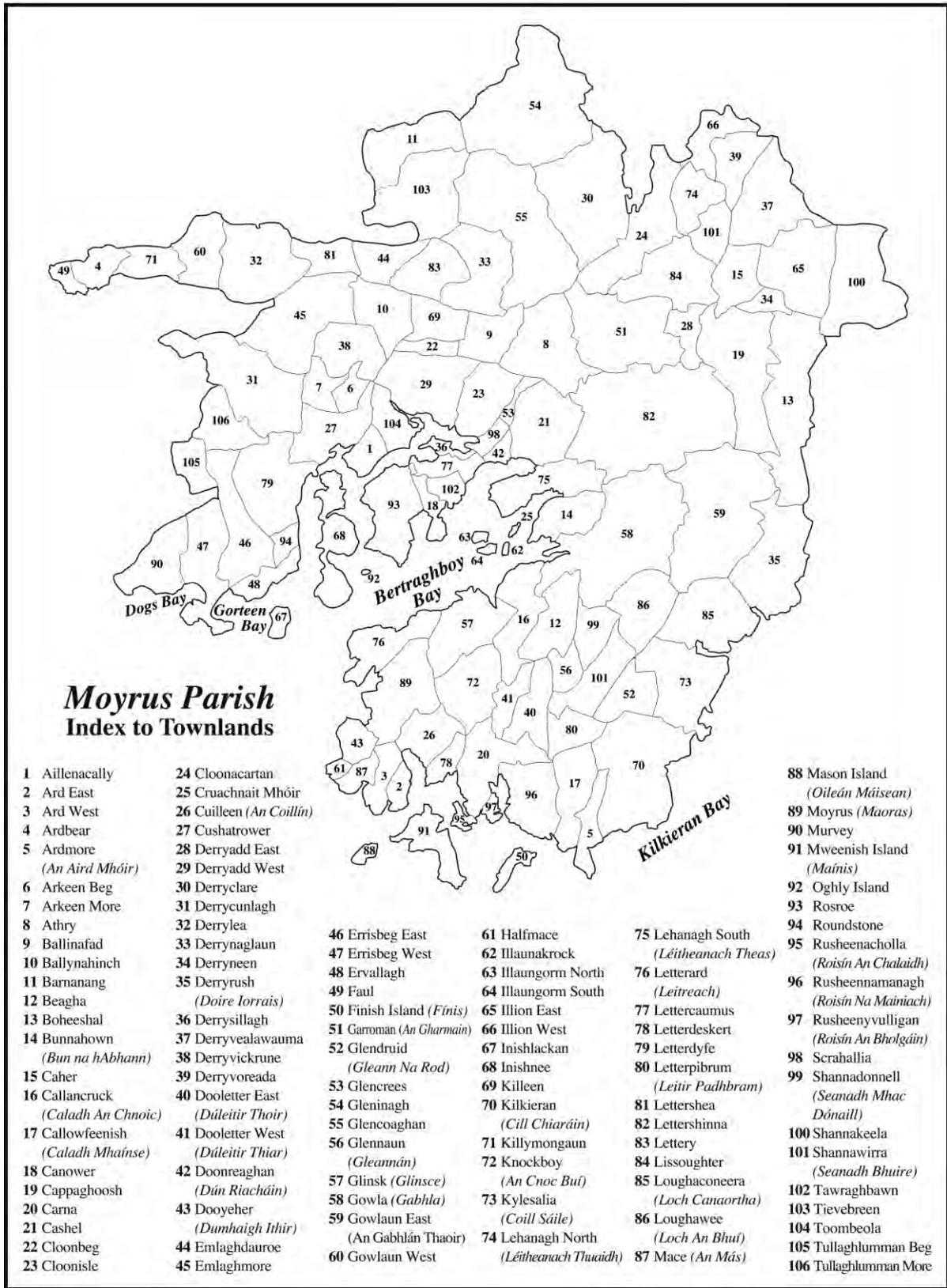
According to the Valuation office records, the land upon which the house is located on was previously rented by a John Conneely in 1882 and a Michael Carroll in 1860. It is not possible to determine if these people had any relationship with Patrick Flaherty.

Because of the nature and situations of the individuals who lived in these one-off rural dwellings, information can often be hard to locate. The key is to knit together a story such as this and then proceed to explore all of the individuals mentioned, using the resources listed previously to explain the story of their life. It was not possible to explore all avenues of this family during the course of this research; however persistence can often lead to new facts which can open up a whole host of new information.

Maps

(All Maps courtesy of Kathleen Villiers-Tuthill)





Omey Parish Index to Townlands

- | | | | | | |
|----------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1 Ailleneavegh | 11 Cartoorbeg | 18 Couravoughil | 28 Fakeeragh | 40 Knockavally | 52 Rossadillisk |
| 2 Ardmore | 12 Claddaghduff | 19 Courhoor | 29 Fountainhill | 41 Knockbaun | 53 Rusheen |
| 3 Atticlogh | 13 Clifden | 20 Cregg | 30 Gannoughs | 42 Knockbrack | 54 Shanakeever |
| 4 Attigoddaun | 14 Clifden Demesne | 21 Cruagh | 31 Glen | 43 Laghtanabba | 55 Shinnanagh |
| 5 Aughrus Beg | 15 Cloghaunard | 22 Cushatrough | 32 Glenbrickeen | 44 Leagaun | 56 Streamstown |
| 6 Aughrus More | 16 Cloon | 23 Derreen | 33 Gooreen | 45 Letterdeen | 57 Sturrakeen |
| 7 Barnahallia | 17 Coolacloy | 24 Doon | 34 Gooreenatinny | 46 Letternoosh | 58 Tievebaun |
| 8 Barnanoraun | | 25 Emlagh | 35 Gortrummagh | 47 Lettershanna | 59 Tooraskeheen |
| 9 Belleek | | 26 Eyrephort | 36 Grallagh | 48 Loughauna | 60 Tooreen |
| 10 Boolard | | 27 Fahy | 37 Inishturk | 49 Maw | 61 Townaloughra |
| | | | 38 Kingstown Glebe
or Ballymaconry | 50 Moorneen | 62 Tullyvoheen |
| | | | | 51 Patches | 63 Turbot Island |

