

# Ireland 2016

John O'Gorman (john@og.co.nz)

2 November 2016

## 1 Intro

Eila and I decided that the time was right to revisit Ireland. My sister Annette and I had accompanied our mother Lorna O'Gorman and her mother Delia Anne Forsman to Johnstown and Galmoy in 1953. Eila and her mother Eileen McNeil had visited Ireland in 1962 and gone to Youghal in county Cork where Eileen's father Michael Keane had been born. Our daughter Laura had followed in 1999 and found Paddy and Kathleen Clancy at the Kilkenny Crystal factory in Callan. Kathleen Clancy was born an O'Gorman.

The circumstances of our previous Irish visits were:

1. 1953: My grandmother had come into a small inheritance. She wanted to visit her brother William's grave in Belgium, see Rome where her son Fr Edward Forsman (Fr Ted or if he was playing cricket F. R. Edward) had been ordained, and her ancestral roots in Ireland. She took her daughter Lorna, and Lorna's children me and Annette who were respectively 9 years and 5 years old with her on this odyssey.
2. 1962: Eila and her mother Eileen were teaching in London as part of their OE. During school holidays they went to Dublin, hired a car for a week and drove round Southern Ireland. They visited Youghal and met up with 2 Aherne sisters who were related by marriage to the Keanes
3. 1999: Our daughter Laura was studying at Cambridge University for her Master of Laws degree and she visited Ireland during a term vacation.

## 2 Why?

We were keen to visit the towns that our Irish ancestors had left in order to migrate to New Zealand. We hoped to find graves of their ancestors if possible. In the event we largely failed in this as lichen has rendered the headstones of the 1800s illegible. Still it was good to get a feel for the places they had left to journey round the world to a new life.

## 3 Who?

Our ancestors were as follows:

- John: Parents: George O'Gorman, Lorna Forsman
  - John Joseph O'Gorman b 1886 Kilkneeden, Kerry - my paternal grandfather

- Patrick Fitzpatrick b 1807 married to Anne Haydn b 1816 Johnstown Killkenny - my maternal grandmother's paternal grandfather
- James Finnerty b 1807 married to Delia Shannahan b 1821 Strokestown Rosscommon - my maternal grandmother's maternal grandfather
- Eila: Parents: John James McNeil, Eileen Keane
  - John McNeil b 1805 married to Catherine McGrath b 1817 New Ross Wexford - Eila's father's grandfather
  - Michael Keane b 1851 Youghal Cork - Eila's maternal grandfather
  - John Tooher b 1833 married to Catherine Darmody b 1839 Ballycahill Tipperary - Eila's maternal great grandparents

All of Eila's ancestors were from Ireland. My record is almost as good except for my maternal grandfather Archibald Forsman was descended from Gabriel Perrou Forsman who was Swedish.

## 4 Where?

The map below shows the route we finally travelled. We had intended to go to Wexford where Eila's McNeil ancestor had left from New Ross after marrying Catherine McGrath from Tintern. Time constraints coupled by the fact there seems little remaining of Tintern (which incidentally had an abbey like Tintern Abbey in Britain which was, of course destroyed by the English).

From the beginning we had decided that we would not be able to fit in a visit to Strokestown in Rosscommon to cover James Finnerty and his wife Delia Shannahan.



Our itinerary was to spend 3 days in Dublin, then hire a car and go touring staying in Bed and Breakfast places and cover as much as we could before returning to catch a plane home after a week.

In Dublin we hoped to find out about Eila's mother's father Michael Keane who we knew had married Mary Tooher in Waihi in 1899. We had tracked down their marriage certificate and also had his death record. Both documents agreed that he had been born in 1854. The Marriage certificate showed his Parents to be John Keane and Mary Murphy. But we had failed to find any record of his birth or baptism in Ireland.

## 5 Dublin

We arrived in Dublin on Monday 27 June and as per our normal thrift we immediately bought visitors passes which allowed us 3 days of unlimited travel on local buses, trams, and trains. Our hotel was the Dublin Central Inn on Talbot Street which was a short walk from a bus stop. Talbot Street was a perfect location from which we were able to walk to all the sights of Dublin. There was a huge amount of roadworks around us as they were laying immense concrete foundations for a comprehensive tram/light rail system.

On Tuesday we spent a very busy day on foot visiting the National Library, the Art Gallery, Trinity College (where we viewed the book of Kells), the AA, Easons the largest book store in Ireland, the Tourist Bureau, and the Catholic ProCathedral.

### 5.1 Library

We went to the free genealogy service in the Irish Public Library and received effective help there. Irish records are incredibly difficult to access because many official records have been lost to fires. No national census was taken before 1821. They were conducted then at 10 year intervals, but 1861 and 1871 were destroyed soon after they were taken. The English had no interest in recording births, marriages, or deaths of Catholics from the 1600s until the 20th century. Often the only surviving records are Catholic records of baptisms and marriages. These too have often been lost through fires and are almost non-existent before 1850. At the library, an assistant told us to use a new digitised database of the Catholic records and to be woolly in our search criteria. We were able to search with +5years latitude and look for Kean\* rather than Keane. Bingo! This found for us a match of a baptism of Michael Kean (sic) baptised 31 August 1851 (3 years before his birth! A true miracle!). His brother John we found also. He was baptised in 1858. For both of them their parents were John Keane and Mary Murphy (which agrees with what had been put on Michael's Waihi marriage certificate). Apparently the brothers Michael and John had both agreed to subtract 3 years off their ages when they embarked for New Zealand. For those interested in trying the site. The URL which works is [www.findmypast.ie](http://www.findmypast.ie)

### 5.2 Art Gallery

The Art Gallery had 2 surprises for us. Firstly Renoir's Parapluie painting of which Eila had bought a reproduction many years ago was on display. Secondly there were many examples of works by Lavery. He was a painter we had never heard of before we visited Churchill's home in Chartwell and had learned that Lavery was his artistic mentor and had often been a guest there. Lavery's works were like photographic records of events of the time. Had we not been to Chartwell the week before visiting Ireland we would likely have walked straight past Lavery's paintings.

### 5.2.1 Renoir's Parapluies



PIERRE-AUGUSTE RENOIR  
b. Limoges 1841 – d. Cagnes-sur-Mer 1919

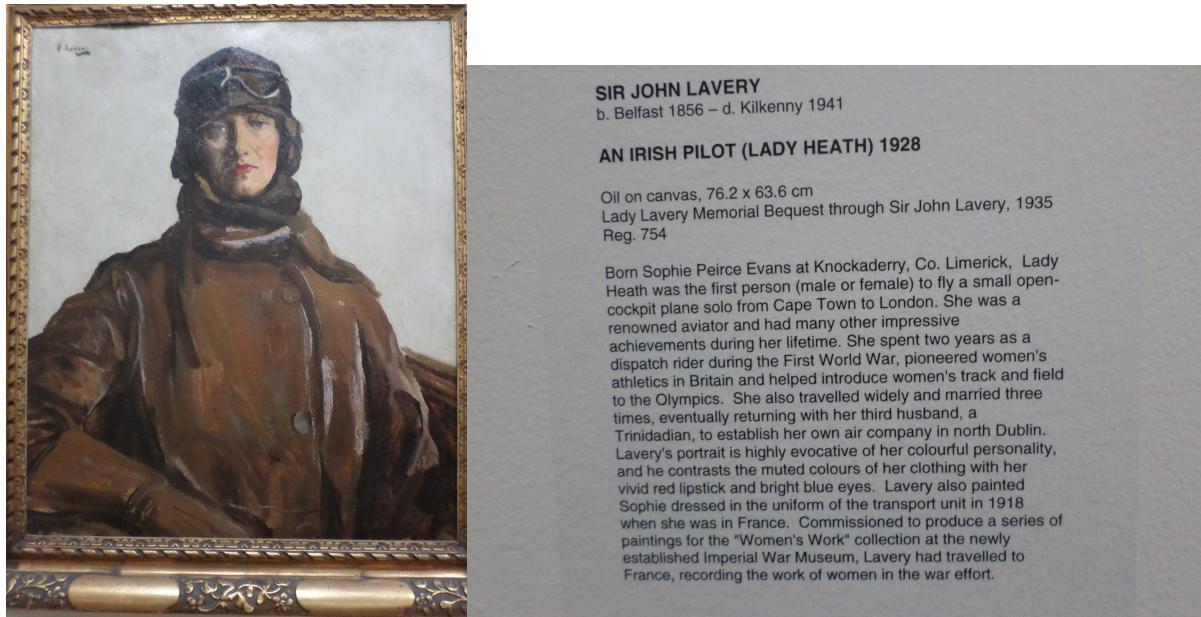
LES PARAPLUIES c. 1881-1886

Oil on canvas, 204 x 140 x 10 cm

Sir Hugh Lane Bequest, 1917; One of the thirty-nine paintings shared with the National Gallery, London. Reg. 3268

There are two distinct styles evident in this work where the family group to the right are painted in a fluid, atmospheric manner and recall Renoir's Impressionistic style of the 1870s. X-ray analysis has shown that the woman on the left originally had clothes close in style to the group on the right, with a frilled skirt, white lace cuffs and a collar. She was also wearing a hat and a belt. Around 1885-86 the artist reworked this figure in a more severe style or what Renoir called his 'manière aigre' (harsh or sour manner). By 1881, Renoir felt that he had gone as far as he could with Impressionism and a visit to Italy at that time inspired a greater sense of structure and solidity in his work. This painting of a bustling rainy day in Paris was a favourite of Hugh Lane's.

### 5.2.2 Sir John Lavery



SIR JOHN LAVERY  
b. Belfast 1856 – d. Kilkenny 1941

AN IRISH PILOT (LADY HEATH) 1928

Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 63.6 cm  
Lady Lavery Memorial Bequest through Sir John Lavery, 1935  
Reg. 754

Born Sophie Peirce Evans at Knockaderry, Co. Limerick, Lady Heath was the first person (male or female) to fly a small open-cockpit plane solo from Cape Town to London. She was a renowned aviator and had many other impressive achievements during her lifetime. She spent two years as a dispatch rider during the First World War, pioneered women's athletics in Britain and helped introduce women's track and field to the Olympics. She also travelled widely and married three times, eventually returning with her third husband, a Trinidadian, to establish her own air company in north Dublin. Lavery's portrait is highly evocative of her colourful personality, and he contrasts the muted colours of her clothing with her vivid red lipstick and bright blue eyes. Lavery also painted Sophie dressed in the uniform of the transport unit in 1918 when she was in France. Commissioned to produce a series of paintings for the "Women's Work" collection at the newly established Imperial War Museum, Lavery had travelled to France, recording the work of women in the war effort.

### 5.2.3 Trial of Roger Casement



Lavery painted this scene from the trial of Sir Roger Casement. He was tried for treason, found guilty, and hanged in Pentonville Prison in London.

At the art gallery I bought a book: *This is Caravaggio* by Annabel Howard a biography of my favourite painter (my 2nd favourite is Turner).

## 5.3 Trinity College

The main attraction in Trinity College is the book of Kells which is a highly illuminated manuscript of the four gospels dating from about 800AD. It is mostly the translation of St Jerome commonly called the Vulgate (in Latin *Editio Vulgata*) but has some excerpts of older versions known as *Vetus Latina*. It was removed from the abbey of Kells when the English dissolved the monastery and it was placed in the nearby church at Kells. In 1654 when Oliver Cromwell and his troops were quartered in the church, the governor of the town sent the book to Dublin for safe keeping.

## 5.4 Automobile Association

We had taken the trouble to get New Zealand AA membership documentation intending to utilise mutual priviledges from the Irish AA for road maps and trip advice to no avail.

The AA no longer prints maps and does not offer any useful service for tourists. They advised that we go to Easons and purchase road atlases there.

## 5.5 Easons Bookstore

We bought a large roadmap of Ireland and an Irish for Beginners schoolbook complete with a CD and internet URLs. I also found a book *Short Stories* by John B Keane which we bought. We are claiming him (without justification) as a relative of Eila! The blurb on the book says that he died in 2002 and was an Irish literary legend: dramatist, novelist, raconteur and wit and his numerous works continue to delight the reading public. Note that the blurb does not avail itself of Colin Dexter's Oxford comma before the final "and" of a list!

## 5.6 Tourist Bureau

We were able to obtain a list of Bed and Breakfast sites here. We used it only once but importantly to book our stay at Springview near Urlingford Kilkenny.

## 5.7 Pro-Cathedral

The English appropriated all Catholic churches and disallowed the use of the same dioceses for Catholic administration. So St Patricks Cathedral is now protestant and the Catholic Cathedral built in 1825 is called the Pro-Cathedral. It was intended to be a temporary measure until they could either return to their original or build a new permanent one. We found it only a block away from our Dublin Central Inn. It is a pleasant combination of Greek and Roman styles. It is notable for the Palestrina Choir which sings there in a Sunday Latin Mass during school term time. They are Dublin's equivalent of the Vienna Boys Choir. A co-parishioner at St Josephs Orakei from Ireland David Homan was a choir member during his school days.



## 5.8 Sculpture

Dublin has lots of sculptures rather like Melbourne Australia. The locals delight in giving them rhyming nicknames. Among those that we saw were

1. Molly Malone. Her name comes from a music hall song “In Dublin’s fair city / where maids are so pretty/” etc. The locals have 3 nicknames for her statue:
  - (a) The tart with the cart
  - (b) The dolly with the trolley
  - (c) The trollop with the scallop(s).
2. James Joyce: Author of *Finnegan’s Wake* and *Ulysses*. Nicknamed the “prick with the stick”
3. Elderly women with shopping bags sitting talking. Nicknamed the “hags with the bags”



## 6 Why 1800s?

Notice that all our Irish forbears who left Ireland were born in the 1800s. Why then did they emigrate to the opposite side of the globe? The answer was that they were fleeing religious persecution and the great potato famine of 1845. They were part of the Irish diaspora when the population of about 8 million was reduced by 2.5 million. The potato famine killed about 1.5 million mostly children and elderly, and another 1 million mostly young people took the opportunity to emigrate to the US, Canada, Australia, and in our case New Zealand. Now more than 80 million Irish descendants from the diaspora exist compared with Ireland's current population of 4.5 million

In 1845 a blight known as *Phytophthora Infestans* struck nearly all the potato production of Ireland. The crop was inedible. The Prime minister Robert Peel reacted by attempting to repeal the Corn Laws which had artificially kept the price of wheat high in order to protect English farmers from foreign competition. The repeal outraged his Tory colleagues, split the government and as a result the opposition party (Whigs) came into power.

The famine was devastating because of 3 factors

- Irish Catholics (84% of the population) were not allowed to own land and had to support their families on what could grow on 5 acres of land leased from English protestant landowners. This restriction forced them to grow potatoes, the only crop that could support a whole family.
- Irish Catholics were denied access to education and the professions.
- The newly established parliament of Whigs (now called Liberals) adopted a policy of laissez-faire which meant that the prime minister Lord John Russell took no action to alleviate the suffering. Nassau Senior, economics professor at Oxford University wrote that the Famine “*would not kill more than one million people, and that would scarcely be enough to do any good*”. They must have been gratified that the famine resulted in a population reduction of 2.5 million through death and emigration. During the famine, the English exported food from Ireland rather than save it for starving locals (as had happened in previous potato famines). The famine was not confined to Ireland but hit the whole of Europe but only Ireland was devastated by it.

## 6.1 Penal Laws

- Catholics had to pay tithes to the protestant church until 1869.
- Catholics were excluded from the English and Irish parliaments and all public offices
- Catholics were not permitted to educate their children at home.
- Catholics were not allowed under pain of imprisonment to keep a school.
- Catholics were not permitted to send their children abroad for education.
- Any churches for Catholics had to be built of wood not stone.
- Parliament banished *all papists exercising any ecclesiastical jurisdiction and all regulars of the popish religion out of the kingdom.* Any returning were to be imprisoned and transported.
- Catholics were forbidden to own any land or to lease land of more than 5 acres.

The Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 finally removed most of the anti-catholic restrictions particularly those that excluded Catholics from politics and the legal profession. But of course by then the damage had been done. It would be many years before they could recover.

We can now understand why every Catholic parish in New Zealand strove to set up a convent school and why so many Catholics went on to secondary and tertiary education.

### 6.1.1 Famine Memorial

In central Dublin alongside the River Liffey, there is a stark memorial of the victims of the potato famine:



## 7 Dublin Day 2

We visited Landsdowne Road, the home of Irish Rugby. The stadium is brand new and having been heavily sponsored is now named Aviva Stadium. Aviva is an insurance company.

We joined a group of tourists and Patrick O'Reilly showed us around all the facilities there. The stadium is used for both Rugby and soccer internationals and local matches. They also stage performances such as rock concerts (They have a huge debt to repay). The design is superb and the facilities at least for the home team are magnificent. Patrick O'Reilly manages the arena and is related to the famous Lion and Irish business man Tony O'Reilly.

Landsdowne Road is at one end of Dublin. Across at the other end is Croke Park - similar venue for the Gaelic sports: hurling and football which are both summer sports in Ireland



We also visited St Stephen's Square. This is St Stephen's Arcade - rather reminiscent of the Victoria Arcade in Sydney.



Our hotel helped us find a good deal with a nearby car rental company called Sixt and we organised to get an automatic car with GPS. We picked it up the next day.

Having reduced our luggage to one case, (the hotel agreed to hold our other case till our return) we walked round the block to the hire place picked up a new BMW with a Garmin GPS unit in addition to the built-in GPS that came with the car. They judged quite rightly that we were unlikely to cope with the built-in one!

## 8 To Urlingford

### 8.1 Johnstown

We set off and much quicker than we expected we arrived in Johnstown county Kilkenny. Johnstown was the birthplace of Patrick Fitzpatrick my maternal grandmother's maternal grandfather and the reason for our 1953 visit there. Johnstown was much bigger than I remembered from that visit when I was 9 years old. In my mind it had consisted of a main square with a hotel, a garage, about 8 houses, a church up the road, and farms in the surrounding land.

In Ireland today Johnstown's most famous son is Willy Fitzpatrick who was born in Johnstown in 1954 and went on to become Ireland's best and most famous hurling champion. He still lives in Johnstown. We don't know if he is a relative.



We found the headstone in Galmoy. It lists 5 Fitzpatricks and was erected by Patrick Fitzpatrick d 3 March 1925 aged 86. It lists

1. His wife Catherine (Dillon) d 6 July 1878 aged 32
2. His mother Catherine d 6 January 1882 aged 60
3. His father Charlis (sic) d 29 September 1882 aged 77
4. His son Michael d 13 August 1921 aged 50

The headstone found in Galmoy does not refer to my ancestral Fitzpatricks. (My Patrick Fitzpatrick was married to Anne Haydn). He was born in Sept 1807 and was my maternal grandmother's grandfather. Ann Haydn was born in 1816 and married Patrick in 1843. They came to New Zealand in 1847 and Anne gave birth to their son Edward on the ship *Minerva* near the cape of Good Hope. Edward married Bridget Finnerty in 21 Nov 1881 in Howick.

## 8.2 Galmoy

Galmoy is a small town a few kilometres from Johnstown and we decided to go there next after seeing the sights of Johnstown. Galmoy was the birthplace of Anne Haydn who married Patrick Fitzpatrick in 1843. She had been born in 1816. To our surprise we discovered the above headstone which records the deaths of a number of Fitzpatricks in the 1800s.

We actually had great difficulty finding Galmoy because our GPS denied all knowledge. Using our road map we came upon a disused zinc quarry nearby where the lone guard gave us directions to the village. Galmoy is more or less how I remembered it but looks more prosperous but seemingly deserted during working hours.



Our GPS system tended to favour narrow rural roads with names like R305 and the photo above shows rush hour in downtown Galmoy!

### 8.3 Springfield

In Dublin we had booked a night by telephone at a Bed-and-Breakfast called Springfield which was located about 3 kilometres from the town of Urlingford. Michael and Eileen Joyce run the B-n-B and a dairy farm. Michael is the farmer and a keen proponent of New Zealand farming methods, so he used electric fences to confine the cattle to small paddocks where they eat the grass down to the ground before he moves them on to the next paddock. Despite the bottom having fallen out of milk prices, he was surviving OK because he had no debts so he was still making a slight profit while others were selling at a loss. Eileen ran the hotel part of things and produced the most superb breakfasts.



#### 8.4 Ballycahill and Holycross

The next day we drove into neighbouring Tipperary. (It wasn't a long way!) The 2 places we wanted to see there were where John Tooher born in 1833 in Ballycahill and Catherine Darmody born in 1839 in Holycross came from. They met on the way to New Zealand aboard the ship Northumberland and married at the Cape of Good Hope. The story is that he was crew and she was a paying passenger. Against the rules he spoke to her and as a result was not allowed jam for the rest of the trip! Their daughter Mary Ann Tooher born in New Zealand in 1866 married Michael Keane Eila's maternal grandfather in 1899. John Tooher subsequently became a miner in Thames.

Ballycahill has a very nice Catholic church and is a pleasant village. Holycross is a former monastery dissolved by the English. It is being gradually repaired and restored and its chapel has become a fashionable venue for marriages. In fact, a wedding took place which we were visiting.



## 8.5 Callan

Returning to Kilkenny we sought out Callan which our daughter Laura had visited in 1999 where she had met Patrick Clancy and his wife Kathleen. Kathleen was an O'Gorman and when Laura told them she lived in Orakei, they asked if she knew their relatives the Downeys. They had in fact been Orakei parishioners with us for more than 20 years and we had no inkling we were related. Shane Downey was a former New Zealand sprint champion and was a colleague of mine on the teaching staff at Sacred Heart College. His younger brother Martin had been a pupil at St Josephs School with Marc and Laura.

We learnt from Richard Clancy who runs Kilkenny Crystal that his parents were both now dead. He directed us to their gravestone and told us that there was a relative of my father George O'Gorman called Aunt Peg who lived in Ballyhar Kilkneeden. We bought some memorabilia at his factory show-room and then visited the cemetery, found and photographed the headstone of his parents, then moved on to Kilkenny town.



After visiting the grave, we went into the town of Callan and had lunch in a pub. A little sight-seeing revealed

a statue of Edmund Rice, founder of the Christian Brothers of Ireland (Fratres Christiani de Hibernia) who ran St Peter's College, Epson where I was a pupil. You might wonder how he was able to run a Catholic school in 1802 before the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1828. The answer is that some of his influential business friends persuaded the Protestant (so called Church of Ireland) bishop to grant him a licence. The Mount Sion on the plaque is not the one in Jerusalem but is the name of the monastery that Rice founded in Waterford.

## 8.6 Kilkenny Town

Next stop was Kilkenny town where Richard Clancy had his shop (as opposed to his factory). Kil(l) means church in Irish.



## 8.7 Galmoy again

That evening Michael Joyce our host at Springview took us to Galmoy for its annual Mass for the Dead. This is normally held in the cemetery attached to the church and relatives of those buried in the graves gather there for an open-air mass. The weather was bad and the Mass was shifted indoors. The church was packed. By good fortune we were in the transept next to the altar and had a grandstand view. The Mass had exactly the words (in English) as our local parish Mass in Orakei but at treble the speed!

Michael had made enquiries on our behalf for any relatives of Ann Haydn and he found one - a lady in her 90s in a rest home. He offered to take us to her. We declined as we thought it would be an imposition on her. Michael had explained that Johnstown had had a big boom time in the 1950s and 1960s when a curative spa became enormously popular and attracted business to the village.

# 9 To county Cork

## 9.1 Youghal

Next day we set off for Youghal where Eila's Keane ancestors came from. Youghal was a seaside holiday venue in the 19th and 20th centuries and was both fashionable and popular with the wealthy. We arrived on Sunday so much was closed but we found that there was a prominent legal firm of Keanes and we looked around where Eila and Eileen had visited the Aherne sisters who were retired spinster teachers. Their mother had been a Keane and married into the Aherne family.

We visited the local cemetery and took the following photos the 2nd in the old part of the graveyard:



The 1st photo shows an Aherne headstone. The 2nd photo shows a typical headstone of the 1800s and shows the difficulty of looking for legible headstones from the 1800s and earlier.

Eila's uncle Bill had found that the parents of their father Michael John Keane were buried in Wind Gap a very small village to the north of Youghal - so we set off there to find what we could which was almost nothing. We were expecting a village square with a market, all we found were 3 modest houses and when we enquired in one of them, no-one knew of the Keanes.

## 9.2 Celtic Inheritance

The Irish are mostly Celtic but they have been invaded by Vikings (852-1200) who originally came to rape and pillage and take treasure from monasteries. The Normans came in 1169 at the invitation of warring Celtic chieftains, integrated with the local populace and became more Irish than the Irish. The later Vikings also integrated and intermarried having embraced Christianity. Trading cities such as Dublin, Waterford, and Cork were founded by Vikings. Later again in the 1600s the English attacked and conquered Ireland, appropriated all the land and gave it to Protestant landlords (such as the Duke of Wellington and Lord Lucan who had a luxurious income from 240 square kilometres of land). In the North a large influx of mainly Scottish Protestants known as the Plantation were imported into Ulster and they remain there today mostly in what is now called Northern Ireland.

Evolutionists say that 30000 years ago when Europeans went into northern climates, the need for a high melanin content in skin cells for protection from high UV light exposure was greatly reduced. All this implies that my belief that pale skin and freckles (related to alleles of MC1R gene) were my inheritance from the Celtic ancestors is misplaced. Rather the pale skin, freckles, and red or blond hair of many Irish descendants have been passed down from either the Vikings (bad) or the Normans (good?). In my case my complexion seems to have come from the Norse-Swedish origin.

Eila's Keane cousins are all dark skinned (what the Americans call black Irish). The Keane family thought that this derived from survivors of the Spanish Armada inter-marrying with the Irish when they were shipwrecked. Research has revealed that the Spanish were systematically sought out and slaughtered by the English army especially by Sir Walter Raleigh who having accepted the surrender of prisoners on condition that their lives were to be spared then proceeded to execute them all.

It is now believed that the Irish are overwhelmingly Celtic and contrary to common opinion and Julius Caesar's *de Bello Gallico* belonged to an extensive set of communities mostly in the areas of what are now Spain, Portugal, Northern Italy (Cisalpine Gaul), France, Belgium, the low countries as well as Britain and Ireland. They were enthusiastic traders, highly skilled metal workers who made and sold or traded exquisite jewelry with the Phoenicians, the Greeks, and later the Romans. They were technically advanced and their ploughs (carrucae) were superior to the Roman farmer's aratrum so that the Latin word aratrum died out of the language. The Romans recognised the Celtic engineering expertise and exploited it in building aqueducts and other buildings using arches. Current archaeology suggests that they established themselves in Portugal (near Huelva) in the neolithic age and flourished in the bronze age (prior to 500BC) then the iron age (after 500).

A recent book by Alice Roberts *The Celts: Search for a Civilization* based on the BBC series we saw recently on the Sky History Channel in New Zealand gives the result of current archaeological, linguistic, and genetic research into their history. They have been known as Celts, or Gauls (Galli in Latin which was a pun on the word for rooster). They even established themselves in Anatolia (modern Turkey) and St Paul wrote to them as Galatians. Istanbul has a Galata bridge and a soccer team called Galatasaray. The north-western corner of Spain is called Galicia and speaks a variety of Portuguese rather than Spanish. Gaelic refers to both the language of Irish and Scottish but the 2 are now mutually unintelligible. Irish pronounce Gaelic as Gay-lick, the Scottish pronounce it as Gall-lick. Alice Roberts shows that the Celts never created an empire but were a loose confederation of tribes who liked to gather together for symposia of drinking, singing, sports, and dancing. The Romans tut-tutted that they liked to drink their wine (and beer) undiluted and that they did indulge in human sacrifices. (Who were the Romans to disapprove?). They had a Druid priesthood who they revered as leading scholars.

How do you pronounce Celtic? The answer depends: The Irish pronounce it as Keltic, everyone else says Seltic (which is how it was pronounced in Latin and later in the Romance languages. The Boston Celtics basketball team and the Glasgow Celtics soccer teams are pronounced the Latin way.

The Celts (Celts from the Iberian peninsula) explain why so many Irish have dark skin and hair. A typical Irish man or woman has beige skin and dark hair.

The Irish language is taught in all Irish schools but there is little evidence of this in the streets of cities. All road signs are bilingual in Irish and English. The speaking of English seems universal. When questioned about this the Irish said that the Irish language is still spoken along the Western coastline of the country in rural areas. The Irish call Ireland either *Ireland* or the *Republic of Ireland* (and seemingly never *Eire* or *Erin*).

### 9.3 The Keanes

The brothers Michael and John Keane were born in 1851 and 1858 respectively to John Keane (spelt Kean in the Catholic baptismal record for Michael) and Mary Murphy in Wind Gap near Youghal and in 1878 they travelled to New Zealand on the Marlborough where they appear to have subtracted 3 years from their ages and nominated Kerry as their place of origin. Michael ended up in Waihi where he ran a successful contracting business providing roading and haulage services. Michael was Eila's grandfather and died in 1922 so she had never known him. His brother John (Uncle John) however after running sheepstations in the south island moved to Thames and at Michael's urging gained a very lucrative contract to build the stopbanks of the river. You can still see them today! Later he came to Waihi to live on Michael's property after his death and set himself up in a shanty on a hill and lived a quiet but industrious life there supplying food from his garden to Michael's widow and to the nuns in the local convent in Waihi. John died while chopping down a pine tree on the property in March 1949 at the age of 91. His body was discovered some time later, sitting against the trunk the axe at his side, wedges in the cut. They buried him hastily. In his will he bequeathed a considerable fortune to Michael's children which set them up nicely. The bequest allowed Eileen to buy the state house she lived in at Ngake St. We live in that house today so we have cause to be grateful for Uncle John's industry, thrift, and generosity.

Waiki <sup>84</sup>  
 December 15. 1946

my dear Edan  
 you will  
 find enclosed  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. three  
 pounds just a small  
 + mao, present. I am in  
 good health and in big  
 galloping form  
 Hoping you are all in  
 the same. I dont like  
 writing with best regards  
 and oceans of love to all

from your Uncle  
 John Keane

The letter above shows that against the odds John had learnt to read and write very well.



Above left is Uncle John and on the right is John Tooher both with Maureen. Both Michael and John Keane had managed despite obstacles to learn reading, (w)riting, and (a)rithmetic and had mastered them enough to run successful commercial lives in New Zealand. The name Keane is pronounced Kane.

#### 9.4 The McNeils

We omitted county Wexford from our travels but details of the McNeils were that John McNeil was born in 1805 in Dores, Inverness, Scotland married Catherine McGrath from Tintern in Wexford. She was born in 1817. They married in New Ross, Wexford and he served in the English army and despite being ruled unfit for service for rheumatism and respiratory problems he served as guard for Napoleon Bonaparte on Saint Helena. After Napoleon's

death they set off for New Zealand in 1852 aboard the Inchannon and came to Howick. They had a son Alexander McNeil born in New Ross Wexford in 1847. Alexander died in Coromandel and was the grandfather of John James (Jack) McNeil, Eila's father born December 1900.

## 9.5 Midleton

We failed in our attempt to find accommodation in Youghal so continued toward Cork. On our way we came upon a pub in a little town called Midleton and called in. The landlord rang around unsuccessfully seeking accommodation for us before a little reluctantly agreeing to put us up for the night.



Midleton pub.

## 9.6 Cork

We drove around the centre of Cork and then carried on to Blarney Castle.

## 9.7 Blarney

We did not Kiss the Blarney stone since we both have the gift of the gab. An interesting feature of the garden surrounds of the Blarney Castle was the woolen pajamas placed around the trunks of the trees.



## 10 Killarney

We arrived in Killarney, County Kerry as luck would have it when the most important Hurling match of the year was on. Every car from out of town was there for the game. Parking was not an option! We were fortunate enough to find the Brook Lodge Hotel a block from the heart of town and they had rooms available. We booked 2 nights and rang Richard Clancy's Aunty Peg. She was happy to meet us briefly as she had a nephew and his children visiting her after the game. So we set off for Kilkneeden, Ballyhar. We eventually found her place after enquiries at a place in Kilkneeden where they directed us to her house (they knew her!). Our O'Gorman ancestor was John Joseph O'Gorman born 1886 in Ballyhar.

When we arrived she was watching the last minutes of the hurling match - a truly terrifying game for the uninitiated, with hurling sticks (like hockey sticks) being swung with gusto within millimetres of opponents' heads. The game was won by the local team.



Above is a photo of me John, my father George Joseph O'Gorman, and my son Marc taken shortly before my father died in 1994.

After our phone call Peg had rung around some O'Gorman contacts mostly priests who assured her that Annette and I were 3rd cousins of her husband George who had died in January 2015. Peg showed us the 2 pictures below. I think you can see a family resemblance. Peg commented that I had an O'Gorman nose! (I thought I had acquired that when I was 3 year old and fell on my face running through the house!)



## 10.1 4 July

That evening we found that Killarney was celebrating the 4th of July with a parade that Americans would have been proud of. We were told that the Irish who had escaped the potato famine and emigrated to America had sent money back to their relatives in Ireland who were extremely grateful. So every 4th of July they have a parade through the main street. All the shops stay open and people gather to enjoy the proceedings. Almost every cliché of America had a representative in the parade: Kenwood trucks, cadillac limousines, Harley-Davidson motor cycles, Western saloon prostitutes, bands, prom queens, etc. etc.



## 11 Ring of Kerry

We had originally intended to drive round the ring of Kerry but while out in Killarney and before watching the parade we came upon a tourist office and decided to book a bus ride instead. The bus set off about 10:00 AM and took the whole day stopping every hour or so at tourist places. The most notable of which was Waterville. Our driver was a brilliant commentator and spent much of his time describing what we could not see because of the misty drizzle!

## 11.1 Waterville

Charlie Chaplin's wife Oona O'Neil was Irish. In the 1960s they and their families habitually spent their holidays around Easter time in a little town called Waterville. They loved their time there and the locals liked them being there. After Charlie's death they set up a statue in his memory.



## 12 Galway

Galway is a busy little town with a holiday tradition. We did not have any known ancestors from here but it was a good place to visit anyway and the famous Galway Bay was well worth a diversion on our return to Dublin.

More sculptures. See us talking to Oscar Wilde and Estonian writer Eduard Vilde. The dual statue is a gift from Estonia on its admission to the EU in May 2004.



The 2nd picture shows a group of Irish performers doing a lunchtime concert.

Another visit to a tourist office resulted in them finding us a BnB in Athlone. So we headed on to that to overnight on our return to Dublin

### 12.1 The Finnerty's

We were running out of time so we skipped going to Strokestown Rosscommon where the Finnerty ancestor of my maternal grandmother's side came from.

James Finnerty b 1807 married to Delia Shannahan b 1821  
They married in 1842 and emigrated to Panmure in Auckland New Zealand

They were my maternal grandmother's (Delia Anne Fitzpatrick's) maternal grandparents. A few years ago a small bistro in the original Panmure pub building was started up and called *Finnerty's*. Sadly it seems to have disappeared. Two of Delia's brothers fought in WW1: Des in Gallipoli, and Bill in Belgium. Bill was killed in Ypres and is buried on Hill 66. We had visited his grave in 1953.

## 13 Athlone

Athlone is a rather industrial small town. We strolled around to the local pub and had a meal. Afterwards we did a little sight-seeing, and so to bed.

## 14 Dublin again

We returned to Dublin without incident, filled the car with fuel, and returned it to the Sixt rental company. No problems (They rated us 11 out of 10!) and we strolled back to our Dublin Central Inn hotel.

### 14.1 Epic Ireland

In our last few hours we took a walk along the Northern bank of the River Liffey which flows through the middle of Dublin from West to East. There are lots of former warehouses and customhouses which have been converted into places of entertainment. One of these is the new Epic Ireland Museum which is a brilliant interactive exhibition of many aspects of the Irish Diaspora. You pay your entrance fee 12 euros for oldies and you are given a “passport”. There are 20 galleries you then enter in order, submit your passport to a machine which stamps it and you proceed to enjoy touch screen displays with holographic forests and opportunities to learn the steps of Irish jigs, sing traditional Irish pub songs, learn of famous Irish expatriates such as Ned Kelly, Billy the Kid, Che Guevara, Grace Kelly, and many others. There are displays on the impact of English occupation, the famine, the Easter uprising, the troubles, and subsequent events through to the present day. Epic Ireland was founded by Neville Isdell former chairman and CEO of Coca Cola from 2004 to 2009. He was born in county Down. The museum opened in May 2016 and expects 75% of its customers to be visitors from abroad.

The Epic Ireland museum is a must see and we heartily recommend it to visitors to Dublin.

At the Epic book store we bought a book *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors* by John Grenham which is a comprehensive 595 page guide to both online and physical resources available. Until very recently the Catholic baptismal and marriage records have only been available online as microfiche copies of the priests’ handwritten documents which are often difficult to read and interpret. Gradually work is being done to render the data in these into a searchable database.

After visiting Epic, we returned to the hotel, collected our luggage, checked out, and took the bus trip to the airport. A wait of the usual 2 hours and we were on our way home.

## 15 Patronymics

A number of our Irish forbears have Mc, O’, and Fitz prefixes to their names.

- Mc as in McNeil means son of. It has variants: Mac, M’, and others
- O’ as in O’Gorman (Ua- in Irish) means grandson of.
- Fitz as in Fitzpatrick is Latin *filius* son of (cf Fr fils).

Some interesting points:

### 15.0.1 O’Gorman

During the 1600s Irish dropped the O’ and Mc prefixes because they could not get work with them. When this restriction eased in the 1800s, the Gormans put the wrong one back! That had originally been McGorman but no O’Gorman remembered that and so we have become O’Gorman.

### 15.0.2 McNeil

Mc tends to be Irish while Mac tends to be Scottish but there is no fixed rule to that effect and there was a lot of traffic in both directions between Scotland and Ireland. The word *Scotti* in Latin meant Irish to the Romans.

### 15.0.3 Fitz

Fitz usually indicates a Norman family. The exception is Fitzpatrick who are all Celtic Irish. We thought that they had adopted the fitz as an attempt to pretend that they were Norman and therefore upper-class. But apparently they were granted it as a title by Henry VIII. My uncle Allen Forsman married Irene FitzGerald - and the name FitzGerald is Norman and ubiquitous throughout Ireland. Every city has at least one shop labelled FitzGerald.

## 16 Conclusion

Both Eila and I agree that Ireland is a much better place than when we had previously visited it. In 1953 most of the Ireland that we saw was desperately poor. Most young people had left the country to seek their fortune elsewhere. The old were left behind with little prospect. They lived in tiny cottages often with dirt floors. Their towns had little industry or commerce. Since independence and joining the European Union things have dramatically improved. Many global businesses have taken advantage of tax concessions and set up factories and offices in Dublin and elsewhere. The Irish economy was called the Celtic Tiger and drove Ireland into the 21st century. Then after the boom came the inevitable bust. Ireland has now recovered from that and is in fine condition commercially, industrially, politically, culturally, and socially.

I had expected that as one of the millions of the diaspora visiting Ireland in search of their Irish roots we would be treated with resentment or grudging acceptance. Not at all. Everyone welcomed us and treated us with good humour and even affection. The Irish are a truly lovely people. There is a uniformity of culture which you do not find in other countries in current times. Dublin and other Irish towns don't give evidence of the tensions we felt in London and other places as we walked the streets. That is not to say that crime does not exist. Michael Joyce told us that the night we stayed on his farm at Springfield, his shed was broken into and some tools were stolen. He expected no useful support from the police (garda).

Today all the towns we visited appeared prosperous, busy, and pleasant. Irish people we talked to have told us how impressed they were when Queen Elizabeth 2nd visited Ireland a few years ago and expressed in public regret at England's part in what had happened in the years following the 1916 Easter uprising. The rural areas still seem deserted and scantly populated but are neither decrepit nor neglected. While well aware of their terrible history at the hands of the English, today's Irish display a truly Christian spirit of forgiveness and optimism.

## 17 Addendum

Barrie Downey and his wife Mary who is related to Irish O'Gormans are members of our St Joseph's parish Orakei. Barrie has made the following response to this document:

Thanks for the fascinating story of your tour of Ireland, John. I have read it through and Mary is about half way.

As you know, Mary and I visited the Clancys in Callan. I had studied the great famine ahead of our trip, so used some of my time there and in Cork to see what I could and to visualise those hideous (for Ireland) years. Paddy showed me what remained of the Callan Poor House, one of many around the country. I could not believe how many were 'housed' and died there in those few short years.

I walked every morning before the others were awake and one of my strolls took me to the Famine Graveyard - three or four km from the village. You may have seen it - an area of one or two hectares encompassed by a stone wall. It had been cleared up not long before my visit and a notice board erected giving some of the horrifying facts of the huge number of nameless bodies interred there. From that and other reading I learned that the daily transport of corpses from the Poor House to the Graveyard kept

quite a number of Callan workers busy, using handcarts and barrows, for several years. When bodies fell off en route, they were shoved into the roadside ditches - many of them to remain there.