

IRISH IN THE NSW IMMIGRATION DEPOSIT JOURNALS

by Pat Stemp & Aileen Trinder – *Irish Link* March 1988

We thought *Irish Link* readers would be interested in an update on the project and some examples we have encountered which might suggest this source as an avenue of research worth checking out in some of their “reached a research dead-end on that Irish ancestor” files. (Unfortunately there is a gap for the years 1866-1874 as the journals are missing, but this does not necessarily mean that your ancestor may not be mentioned in the Journals as he or she may have been a sponsor – in some cases as long as 15-20 years after arrival in the Colony).

Once embarked on our project, it soon became apparent that the majority of immigrants were Irish. In 1858, for instance, 51.8% of the immigrants were from Ireland (with the remainder from England, Scotland, Wales or Europe). In 1864, the percentage of Irish was 69.66% and in 1875 it was 58.8%.

Before giving details of some particular immigrants we followed through the shipping lists, we felt that it is worth emphasising here, especially for non-NSW researchers and beginners, that where there are two reel numbers for a particular ship specified in the Archives Office of NSW [*now State Records*] Guide to Free Immigrants and Shipping it is essential to check BOTH films as different information is available on each. Some ships have only one reel listed and this usually means that it arrived in the 1860-62 period when the Immigration Board’s lists are missing. Also, in the period around 1862 and after 1870 the Board’s lists baldly specify a county and nothing more. So, even if you already have the name of a ship on which your ancestor arrived, a check in the Immigration Deposit Journals (under both immigrants and depositors) could lead you to that vital extra information such as the parish of residence or origin, or that all-important detail for Ireland, the townland, and which might be available from no other source. Often, investigating the records of associated families, or other individuals sponsored by the same depositor, can provide additional leads to the area from which you ancestor originated. These are some examples of the type of information which can be extracted from the Journals:

John Rooney, aged 40, appears in the NSW Archives Office shipping lists as arriving on the “Corona” in 1879. Both shipping reels for the ship give only Kings Co as his native place. However, he appears in the Immigration Deposit Journals as John Roney of Gillan, Kings Co. sponsored by James Murphy in the same year. His referee is Mr Terrence Dooley of Cloughan, Kings Co, so here are not one, but two possibilities for tracking John down in Ireland, not to mention the name variation which might not previous have been considered.

The Hawkins family also arrived on the “Corona”. The shipping record shows only that they were from Wexford and that John Hawkins, the head of the family, died on the voyage. However, the Journals, while also noting John’s death, disclose that he was the father of the Depositor Edward Hawkins and that his address was C/o Thomas Wilkinson, Esq, Castlehill Enniscorthy, County Wexford. The family’s referee was the Rev Mr Murdoch, the Rectory, Enniscorthy.

Similarly, Richard Hurley, 22 arrived on the “Kapunda” and the shipping record states only “Cork”. His entry in the Journals states that he was living at “Farnthomas” Co Cork, Ireland. The closest we could come to that place in the Index to Townlands was Farranthomas Cork W.R. Richard’s referee (his parish priest) was living in “Moragh” Co. Clare. We could find no townland or parish of that name, but did find a Moreagh in Cork W.R.

Mary Collins, 17, arrived on the “Telegraph”, which has only one archives reel and her record showed only Co Clare as her native place. Mary’s Journal entry shows her address as O’Brien’s Bridge, Co Limerick. In the Townlands Index we found O’Brien’s Bridge to be in Co. Clare, in the Poor Law Union of Limerick. This would be of great help in isolating this Mary Collins from the no doubt numerous others of the same name, and given the excellent Clare parish records available, there would be a high probability of finding her there.

The shipping record for John O’Donnell, 26, gave his native place as Donegal only. The Journals give his residence as Prucklisk, Letterkenny, Co Donegal and his referee was the C of E clergyman of the parish. The same deposit entry included Margaret, 24, on the same ship and William, 30, who applied for a deposit refund. Possible brothers and sister? This case points up another advantage of finding your ancestor in the Journals – they are shown as part of a family group. In the shipping list, relationships such as brother/sister are not always apparent.

When we were in Ireland in June last, we made a pilgrimage to Oatfield in the Parish of O’Callaghan’s Mills, Co. Clare. (We should of course mention that we were using a map supplied by The Irish Link!) Oatfield was the townland from which Aileen’s O’Shaughnessy ancestor emigrated to Australia. The congregation was just leaving the church after Mass, and when we enquired after any families of those names in the area, a most helpful elderly gentleman, after showing us the church, took us to the remains of the O’Shaughnessy farmhouse and told us that all the O’Shaughnessys had left for Australia last century. Only last week, we came to the entries in the 1880 Deposit Journals showing the deposit by Thomas O’Shaughnessy for two O’Brien families who gave their address as O’Callaghan’s Mills and the address of the referee as Oatfield.

We have noticed in the Journals, too, that while a person might be living in say Co Cork, the referee may be in adjoining Limerick, and it should always be borne in mind that there are often family or employment links between, for example, counties such as Tipperary/Clare or Fermanagh/Tyrone, so it is wise not to overlook this fact when researching. In some cases a Clare/London or Kerry/Lancashire connection shows up, or Dublin/Galway.

We have coded our entries in accordance with the Chapman Codes for counties and locations, (supplemented by our own abbreviations for occupation, marital status, family relationship, parish, ship etc), so it is possible to tell at a glance the county where an immigrant was living in the home country at the time a deposit was made for them here in the Colony and what category of additional information is contained in a particular deposit entry. If the immigrant’s referee (commonly the parish priest, minister or employer) was living at a different place, our codes record that fact too.