

# Promoting and Encouraging Genealogy

## Tourism in County Mayo

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I hereby declare that this is my own work

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## **List of Abbreviations**

<b>FÁS</b>	Foras Áiseanna Saothair
<b>IFHSC</b>	Irish Family History Society Co-Operative
<b>IFHF</b>	Irish Family History Foundation
<b>IGP</b>	Irish Genealogy Project
<b>IGL</b>	Irish Genealogy Limited
<b>NGP</b>	National Genealogy Project
<b>NMFHRC</b>	North Mayo Family History Research Centre
<b>SMFHRC</b>	South Mayo Family History Research Centre
<b>TIARA</b>	The Irish Ancestral Research Association
<b>UHFNI</b>	Ulster Historical Foundation of Northern Ireland
<b>SFADCO</b>	Shannon Free Airport Development Company
<b>APGI</b>	The Association of Professional Genealogists of Ireland
<b>AUGRA</b>	Association of Ulster Genealogists and Record Agents
<b>NLI</b>	National Library of Ireland
<b>GOI</b>	Genealogical Office of Ireland
<b>NA</b>	National Archives
<b>GRO</b>	General Records Office

## **Abstract**

There are over 70 million people of Irish descent scattered across the globe, forming a nostalgic Diasporic network that links County Mayo and the rest of Ireland to places such as the USA, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Argentina. While the concepts of cultural affinity and roots have served as 'pull' factors which have attracted large numbers of sentimental ethnic tourists to Ireland since the 1970s, the advent of the Internet as a 'virtual' research tool for family history research, and the ongoing reconfiguration of the tourism industry in general, have raised countless questions about the future of Ireland's genealogy tourism industry. Using evidence gleaned from extensive fieldwork in County Mayo, this study is concerned with the challenges and opportunities currently facing genealogy as a tourism product. Special attention is paid to the notion that tourism in the new Europe needs to be proactively managed with forethought rather than retrospectively reacting to change. Following an overview of the current heritage management difficulties that exist in promoting and encouraging genealogy tourism in County Mayo, an attempt is made to illustrate how these may be best addressed by the development of new marketing strategies and work/organisational practices for the genealogy tourism industry as a whole – including the encouragement of dynamic activity within both 'real' and 'virtual' tourism sub-spaces. The findings reveal that although there have been significant improvements in the provision of genealogy services in County Mayo since the turn of the millennium, these have not been matched by dedicated marketing strategies by the service providers and the tourism agencies to promote these services. Changes in tourism patterns and the emergence of cultural tourism as an important element in the tourism product mix, suggest that there are real opportunities to further nurture and develop genealogy tourism in County Mayo.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **Introduction**

## Introduction

In the late 1970s a growing interest in tracing family history was marked by an upsurge in demand for use of national repositories and by the establishment of community based local heritage centres, notably in Clare and Limerick where they began the task of indexing parish records. By the early 1980s this movement had spread to most parts of the island of Ireland. In 1984 the majority of these centres recognised the need to establish standard procedures for indexing records and also to establish links between the various centres. This led to the founding of the Irish Family History Society and subsequently to the Irish Family History Foundation (IFHF), a cross border network of locally-based genealogy centres representing and serving all traditions on the island of Ireland and the wider Diaspora (estimated at the time to number in excess of 70 million people of Irish descent worldwide).

During the mid-1980s the business opportunities which this activity represented began to be recognised and in 1988 a government initiative saw the setting up of a Tourism Task Force which had a Roots and Tourism sub-committee. This led to the establishment of the Irish Genealogy Project (IGP) in 1989, which had a wide membership encompassing the Taoiseach's office, tourism agencies, national repositories, commercial genealogists, and local genealogy centres. Its brief was to explore how genealogy could provide a viable added value product to the tourism sector. In 1997 the responsibility for steering the Project was assigned to a limited company, Irish Genealogy Limited (IGL), a company limited by guarantee whose mission was to generate economic activity and employment throughout the island of Ireland by boosting roots tourism. Originally supervised by the Department of Arts Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, it is currently within the remit of the Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism.

In 1991 Bord Fáilte estimated that 53,000 visitors to Ireland participated in genealogy research. By 1995 a Bord Fáilte analysis of the tourism industry, *Perspectives on Irish Tourism* found that this number had risen to 84,000 and to 108,000 by 2000. Thereafter the numbers declined and an unpublished report by Fáilte Ireland in 2004 estimated that the number had fallen to 43,000.

This dramatic reversal of fortunes cannot be examined exclusively in the context of genealogy tourism, since the past 3-4 years have seen major changes in the worldwide tourist industry which pose serious threats to Ireland's traditional tourist product mix. This is particularly relevant to the West of Ireland and in particular to County Mayo, the

geographical focus of this study. The economic boom over the past decade has transformed Ireland from one of the poorest countries in Western Europe to one of the wealthiest. However the so-called 'Celtic Tiger' has not brought a proportionate gain in industrial and commercial expansion to the West of Ireland although some improvements in the local infrastructure particularly the opening of Knock International Airport (Horan International Airport) in May 1986, as an arrival point for pilgrims visiting Our Lady's Shrine, Knock, has helped to promote tourism as a major employer and wealth creator. In 2003 overseas visitors to Mayo totalled 290,000 generating revenues in excess of € 100m.<sup>1</sup>

However sudden and dramatic changes in tourism trends have created the need to re-examine the structure of the Irish tourist industry and more importantly the product mix which although based on an idyllic, rural landscape peopled by friendly welcoming country folk no longer reflects the reality of a high cost based country where the majority of the population now live and work in the expanding towns and cities.

These changes have been brought about not exclusively by the change in Ireland's economic fortunes but by the 'globalisation' of tourism as cheap air travel has opened up territories and countries which previously could only be visited by a small minority of wealthy travellers. In addition, the re-mergence of sovereign eastern European states following the collapse of the Soviet Union has opened up a new market of culturally and geographically 'rich' countries with low wage, low cost economies which are in open competition with Ireland in offering a range of alternatives to the 'Sun, Sand and Sea' destinations which have dominated the cheap mass-tourism market during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition a further threat to Irish tourism outside of Dublin, Cork and Galway are the so-called 'City Break' or 'Short Stay' vacations, which in the main exclude the scenically picturesque traditional tourist places like Westport, County Mayo, or Connemara, because their remoteness from the major airports and their poor transport infrastructure do not accommodate quick day tours as part of the package.

Demographic changes are also set to impact on the tourism products currently promoted by the Irish tourist market. Populations in mainland Europe, Britain and America which provide the main source of inbound tourist to Ireland are healthier, living longer, retiring earlier and enjoying greater discretionary income than previously was the

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<sup>1</sup> [www.wdc.ie](http://www.wdc.ie) (accessed on 3 April 2006).

case.<sup>2</sup> The ageing traveller is more demanding and better educated, requiring tailored or customised holidays. Accommodation needs are moving away from cheap and in some case not so cheap bed and breakfasts towards mid-range to first class hotel accommodation. More healthy life styles include activity holidays such as walking, golf, horse riding and sailing and demand culturally rich experiences which include film and music festivals, painting holidays, writing clinics and similar hobby-based pursuits. Although 21<sup>st</sup> century tourists are still likely to enjoy the more traditional offerings as part of their holiday experience, only new initiatives which recognise and effectively meet these changes in consumer demand are likely to produce long term sustainable tourism revenues. These changing trends have been recognised by tourism authorities principally Fáilte Ireland, and new marketing initiatives are being developed by regional authorities who seek to re-position Ireland as a tourist destination which can meet the challenges outlined above.

Against this background, this study explores the anatomy and growth of the genealogy industry (past and present), genealogical networks and their operation, the business of family history research centres, and associated commercial activities throughout the county of Mayo. It also examines the genesis and meaning of genealogy and its relationship to individual and collective identity and concludes with an investigation into the relationship between genealogy and tourism, and the potential of genealogy tourism as a driving force of regional development (with specific reference to County Mayo).

Chapter Two examines the extensive corpus of literature and scholarship which collectively contributes to an understanding of the genesis of genealogy in Ireland and its relationship to heritage and history. The literature includes comment and analysis at the cutting edge of contemporary understanding of how individual and collective memory of the past is understood by both the indigenous Irish population and by the wider Diaspora.

The main body of this study details the results of a comprehensive cross-sectoral analysis of the genealogical industry of County Mayo based on feedback from relevant stakeholders (e.g. professional genealogists, 'Genealogy Tourists', the hospitality sector) and shows how the results of this analysis can be used by policy makers and planners to target marketing and regional development funding. The research methodologies used to obtain this data are detailed in Chapter Three. They include both quantitative and qualitative data gathered from both primary and secondary research sources via

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<sup>2</sup> Tourism Ireland and Marketing Insights, *The Ageing Consumer* (Tourism Ireland, Dublin, 2004).

questionnaires, focus groups and one-to one interviews and an analysis of the major reports on the topic undertaken over the past 20 years by government departments and private stakeholders in the genealogy industry.

Chapter Four examines the anatomy of genealogy, its nature, meaning and identity. Drawing on the literature outlined in Chapter Two, this chapter traces the development of the cultural mix of the Irish people from earliest times and the imperatives which created the need to establish kinship and bloodlines in early Irish society. It also critically examines the main economic, social and political factors which resulted in the dispersal of the Irish population in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and the creation of a Diaspora estimated at over 70 million persons worldwide, principally in North America and Australia, with Mayo in particular providing a disproportionate number of these emigrants. The chapter then traces the development of 'roots' tourism in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the descendants of this mass migration have returned to Ireland in an attempt to reconstruct family histories, to establish possible connections with relatives and to establish a sense of identity with what they perceive to be their history and their heritage.

The fragmented nature of the Irish genealogy industry and the difficulties that this fragmentation creates in promoting and marketing genealogy tourism is addressed in Chapter Five. This chapter summarises the results of a baseline audit of the provision of genealogy services in County Mayo and the part that genealogy tourism plays in the more comprehensive field of heritage and cultural tourism in the county. Opinions were sought from government agencies (including the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government), local authorities (Mayo County Council's Heritage Officer and County Manager), Enterprise Boards, FÁS, tourism agencies (Fáilte Ireland and Fáilte Ireland West), umbrella organisations (Mayo Naturally, Connemara Tourism, An Taisce), and national genealogical bodies (the Irish Genealogical Project, the Association of Professional Genealogists in Ireland, the Association of Ulster Genealogists and Record Agents, and the Irish Family History Foundation). In addition opinions have also been sought from principal genealogy societies in the main areas of the Irish Diaspora, including the UK, USA, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia.

Comprehensive field interviews were also conducted with 'Genealogy Tourists' and potential 'Genealogy Tourists', the aim of which was to compile a series of profiles which could assist decision makers in placing genealogy tourism as a viable and sustainable

product within the wider portfolio of Mayo's heritage and tourism industry and assisting them to construct appropriate marketing models.

Chapter Six distils the results of the field and desk research by constructing an appropriate model for sustainable regional development, with particular reference to the potential of genealogy as a tourism growth product in County Mayo. The chapter also analyses the results of a web-based electronic questionnaire designed to examine and measure the extent to which the Internet is used for genealogy research. It also includes the work-in-progress by the Family History Research Centres and Mayo County Library to integrate their resources, so as to provide seamless access to the total genealogical resources of the county via a public-private partnership which includes the use of the Internet to undertake research. A summary of the entire research findings of this study is furnished in Chapter Seven.



**CHAPTER TWO**  
**Literature Review**

## Introduction

The literature relevant to this work's examination of the anatomy and growth of the genealogy industry throughout the county of Mayo is reviewed in this chapter. The type of literature reviewed includes books, journal articles, newspaper articles, government publications (state and semi-state, including relevant tourist development authorities), and local authority publications (development plans and annual reports). The published material includes contemporary critical thinking on the concepts of 'cultural tourism' and 'heritage tourism', both of which are terms to which 'genealogy tourism' may be annexed. It also examines how the past is interpreted in the present and how heritage is reconstructed to meet present cultural, national and economic goals.

## Concepts of Heritage

Our rich cultural and spiritual heritage, today's cultural vibrancy, our membership of the European Union, our legendary missionary and peace-keeping endeavour, we have made an impact on the world far above what might be expected from a small nation. Around the world the huge global Irish family joins us in looking at this new Ireland with gratitude and respect... We need a modern world which is not in the vicelike grip of the past, but which is also not amputated from the past. So there you have another hope, that we will find the right relationship between what has gone and what is.<sup>1</sup>

The concept of heritage and genealogy tourism is covered in a wide variety of literature and its concerns range from debate about the nature of heritage to the nature of tourism. In their preface to *Heritage and Tourism in 'The Global Village'*,<sup>2</sup> Boniface and Fowler wrote that 'Tourism is fast becoming the biggest industry in the world, "The Greatest Show on Earth", and the life blood of much of that industry is heritage'.

The Irish national tourism bodies took up this theme in many of their publications. Marketing Ireland's heritage is seen by tourism chiefs as presenting a unique and distinct product which cannot be replicated anywhere else but in Ireland but it becomes problematical when decisions are made as to what or whose heritage is selected and how it is presented. What is attractive to a chosen market? What is conveniently omitted? In *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*,<sup>3</sup> David Lowenthal cites examples of the process of upgrading heritage by endowing the past with today's exemplary perspectives:

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<sup>1</sup> President of Ireland, Mary McAleese, cited in B. Grey, *Women and the Irish Diaspora* (Routledge, London, 2004), p. 153.

<sup>2</sup> P. Boniface and P. J. Fowler, *Heritage and Tourism in 'The Global Village'*, (Routledge, New York, 1993), p. xi.

<sup>3</sup> D. Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998), p. 153.

Chiding the Cassandras who defame “our heritage and our past”, Prime Minister Thatcher in 1983 found British History wholly laudable and avowed to “keep the best of the past”.

But representing the past as heritage to overseas ‘Genealogy Tourists’ demands special care and attention, because for many, the past has already been reconstructed. Lowenthal observes that oblivion is central to the American dream and that immigrant offspring eagerly forgot the Old World to embrace the New, to obliterate centuries worth of memory in just two to three generations.<sup>4</sup> Lowenthal draws particular attention to the downgrading of significant events from the past by successive American leaders, Lincoln and slavery and more recently Bush and Vietnam, when in his inaugural address he said that “the final lesson of Vietnam is that no great nation can long afford to be sundered by a memory”,<sup>5</sup> a sentiment that, in the light of as yet unknown outcomes of the war in Iraq, may yet come back to haunt him.

America of course is not alone in the downgrading or indeed the airbrushing out completely, of particularly painful or embarrassing events in a nation’s history. In the case of the island of Ireland the existence of two effectively sovereign states existing side by side since 1922 has resulted in significantly varying interpretations of the past. In McCarthy’s edited collection, *Ireland’s Heritages, Critical Perspectives on Memory and Identity*, the relationship between the past and the present is critically examined by the contributors, who seek to ‘illustrate the validity of multiple representations of the Irish past, showing how scrutiny of heritage practices and meanings is so essential for illuminating our understanding of the present’.<sup>6</sup> In focussing on the theme of memorilisation of the past from particularly Irish-American and Irish Australian perspectives, the contributors provide valuable insights into a greater understanding of how the 21<sup>st</sup> century Irish Diaspora ‘remember’ Ireland from contemporary portrayals of the past. Of particular importance in this context are the ‘lost heritages’ that is those heritages which did not feature prominently in metanarratives of Irish identity in the early years of independence. A striking example of this collective amnesia has been highlighted

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 157.

<sup>6</sup> M. McCarthy, “Preface”, in M. McCarthy (ed.), *Ireland’s Heritages: Critical Perspectives on Memory and Identity* (Ashgate Publishing Ltd., Aldershot, 2005), p. xi.

in Morrissey's examination of the Connaught Rangers and the role that they played in the First World War.<sup>7</sup>

An example of reconstructing the past and an important one in relation to developing genealogy tourism in County Mayo, is described by D. Brett in the *The Construction of Heritage*.<sup>8</sup> It concerns the interpretation of the Céide Fields, a 5000 year old Neolithic settlement near Ballycastle, County Mayo. In highlighting this example Brett seeks to illustrate the importance and the dangers of portraying imaginative representations of events as part of a heritage and cultural tourism experience where 'these representations have a necessary and dynamic relationship to questions of history and legitimacy'.<sup>9</sup> The Céide Fields centre uses audio-visual techniques to explain the geology, geography and likely climatic conditions which allowed for this extraordinary development in the early settlement of Ireland, and employs static displays of huts and dummies to portray this ancient life. Brett draws attention to this type of simulation as being a constant feature of the heritage idea of 'what might have been the reality that could be best exhibited here?' He illustrates this point by quoting from the official brochure which asks the question 'Were these people Celts?' and answers 'Definitely not. And then again maybe yes'.<sup>10</sup> The intriguing and tantalising question as to when the Celts first came to Ireland continues to challenge academics from anthropologists to archaeologists to linguists. However what is certain is that in raising the question at all, the Office of Public Works (OPW), which manages the site, is hinting at a construct of Irish 'heritage' in which much is at stake, particularly for the tourism industry. Brett observes that the origins of a people is 'a nexus around which concepts of race, nationality, history and culture continually circle and that Ireland's claims to Celticity are now part of a major Industry'.<sup>11</sup> He argues that this failure by the OPW to elaborate on the origins of the Neolithic farming community and the question of Irish Celtic identity, leaves it for the visitor to make his or her own mind up and that the impressive pyramidal structure built to interpret the site 'is no more than a rhetorical gesture directed at nothing clearly defined'.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See J. Morrissey, "A Lost Heritage: The Connaught Rangers and Multivocal Irishness", in M. McCarthy, (ed.) *Ireland's Heritages, Critical Perspectives on Memory and Identity*, (Ashgate Publishing Ltd., Aldershot, 2005), pp. 71-87.

<sup>8</sup> See D. Brett, *The Construction of Heritage* (Cork University Press, Cork, 1996).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p. 129.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p. 137.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p. 139.

Failure to develop linkages with the present and the surrounding landscapes in presenting the past is a criticism levelled at modern interpretive and heritage centres like the Céide Fields. Kneafsey argues that although ‘landscapes, ancient history, botany, geology and ecology may be the themes being presented and that is the prime purpose of the centre, the fact that there is little reference to neighbouring people and villages leaves the visitors with a selective image of the place.’<sup>13</sup> Boniface and Fowler also observe that in many parts of the world, the ‘landscape itself, however viewed, is as much part of the heritage as the more obvious monuments and sites to which the air-conditioned coach whisks the ex-pressurized passenger on landing’.<sup>14</sup>

### **Irish Studies and the Irish Diaspora**

Consideration of the worldwide dispersal of emigrants from Ireland has received a significant emphasis from writers in the field of Irish Studies. The beginnings of a credible academic attention to Irish emigration and immigration in the USA however can ‘be traced back to the 1920s, a decade which marked both the greatest sustained exodus of people out of Ireland and the rise of academic scholarship as a profession’.<sup>15</sup> Post Second World War, Fanning attributes two continuing catalysts for continued interest in developing the scholarship in this area. The first one was the G.I Bill of Rights which opened up the opportunity to attend college, and the second was the election to the presidency of Boston Irish-American John F. Kennedy.<sup>16</sup>

During the 1970s, Irish-American scholarly research contributed to a heightened ethnic consciousness among descendants of European emigrants, who had been inspired by the example of African American self-awareness during the Civil Rights movement. For the Irish, a further catalyst was the increased attention that accompanied the renewal of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland. This decade marked the emergence of a new generation of American academics whose work built on the solid foundations laid in the 1960s. Continuing into the 1980s, Fanning notes that ‘much of the valuable new scholarship consisted of exploration of various immigrant destinations and subcultures,

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<sup>13</sup> M. Kneafsey, “A Landscape of Memories: Heritage and Tourism in Mayo” in U. Kockel (ed.), *Landscape, Heritage and Identity: Case Studies in Irish Ethnology* (Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 1995), p. 140.

<sup>14</sup> Boniface and Fowler, *op. cit.* p. xi.

<sup>15</sup> C. Fanning, “Introduction”, C. Fanning (ed.) *New Perspectives on the Irish Diaspora* (Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, 2000), p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

including studies of the Irish in Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, New Orleans, San Francisco, Milwaukee, Lowell (Massachusetts), and Butte (Montana).<sup>17</sup>

Amongst the more challenging views emerging from these studies is that the Irish emigrant was in some way different to other European emigrants and that the Irish in America or elsewhere form a distinct ethnic group, namely that of the Irish Catholic. Akenson, by contrast, argues that 'the bulk of the Irish ethnic group in the United States at present is, and probably always has been Protestant',<sup>18</sup> and further argues that the migrant generation or first generation Irish and the subsequent entire ethnic group made up of multiple generations are two different entities and should not be viewed as one homogenous whole. Moreover, the notion that the Irish were significantly different to other European peoples is highlighted by Bielenberg who observes that alongside other European colonists Irish emigrants willingly collaborated in the establishment of the British Empire and the expansion of North America. He notes that 'Irish immigrant merchants played an important role in American commercial expansion during the colonial period bridging the connections and emigrant routes between Ireland and the New World'.<sup>19</sup>

In her work on the multiple meanings of Irish genealogical identities, the cultural geographer Catherine Nash makes the point that genealogy is 'at once 'a reflection of politics and emotion', and that 'personal reasons for pursuing an interest in ancestry always intersect with wider cultural processes, politics, and social concerns'.<sup>20</sup> She puts forward the proposition that in the United States of America, for example, interest in Irish ancestry amongst the Irish Diaspora was in part prompted by anxieties about new migrant flows from Central and South America. She questions the frequently-quoted fact that there are 70 million people of Irish descent worldwide, as suggesting that they are all of a pure line of descent, and ignoring the fact that there are undoubtedly other ethnicities in a post migration family tree. Her theories are borne out in practical terms by the profiles of the contestants in competitions such as that for the annual selection of the Rose of Tralee, where today contestants from around the world with any trace of Irish blood in their veins

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> D. H. Akenson, "Irish Migration to North America, 1800-1920", in A. Bielenberg (ed.) *The Irish Diaspora* (Pearson Education, Harlow, 2000), p. 111.

<sup>19</sup> A. Bielenberg, "Irish Emigration to the British Empire, 1700-1914", in A. Bielenberg, (ed.) *The Irish Diaspora* (Pearson Education, Harlow, 2000), p. 216.

<sup>20</sup> C. Nash, "Genealogical Identities", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* Vol. 20, (2002), p. 30.

are entitled to enter, whereas formerly the rules were stricter. Nash's exploration of the connections between the Human Genome Project and the World Family Tree Project (a project organised by a company called genealogy.com, which invited its customers to submit their research and so contribute to the creation of an interlocking family tree) are explored in the same article, and she raises interesting ideas in relation to the Irish Diaspora and the practical difficulties raised for genealogical tourists trying to map a family tree. Nash also makes reference to Sarah Franklin's argument that the 'the rapid emergence of new genetic technologies has placed a premium on familiar anthropological questions such as the meaning of genealogy, parenthood or a "blood tie"'.<sup>21</sup>

Elsewhere, Nash explores what she describes as 'the geographies of relatedness'.<sup>22</sup> She discusses the symbolic power of biological or blood relatedness and of the consequences for instance of adoption. She discusses the ways in which particular notions of heterosexual kinship as the structural origin of culture are reappearing in debates in France about gay and lesbian marriage. These discussions have a resonance in Ireland in relation to reported cases recently heard by the Irish High and Supreme Courts dealing with gay marriage and the position of children within same sex relationships. The outcome of these cases could in theory alter the definition of what constitutes a 'family' in Irish law and will have implications for the traditional structure of the family tree.

### **Practicing Genealogy**

There is, unsurprisingly, an extensive catalogue of guides, manuals and other works dealing with the practice of genealogy, ranging from the 'do it your self' basic starter books to comprehensive manuals compiled by professional genealogists. The works reviewed hereafter are therefore not exhaustive nor is the selection intended to indicate any qualitative assessment of the contents. They were selected because they examine a predominantly Irish background to the research and review largely Irish sources of relevant records, and in one example, the records of County Mayo, the administrative area of Ireland in which this research is focused.

Unlike many authored guides to the practice of genealogy, *Irish Genealogy, A Record Finder*,<sup>23</sup> edited by Donal Begley, presents contributions from experts associated with the

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<sup>21</sup> Franklin, cited in *Ibid.* p. 28.

<sup>22</sup> See C. Nash, "Geographies of Relatedness", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* Vol. 30, Issue 4, (2005), pp. 449-62.

<sup>23</sup> D. Begley (ed.), *Irish Genealogy: A Record Finder* (Heraldic Artists, Dublin, 1981).

Genealogy Office Dublin, formerly the Ulster Office of Arms. Compiled in 1981, this early guide opens with a short history of the origins of the people of Ireland and immediately establishes the rich diversity of immigration into Ireland over the millennia which, although predominately Celtic, is far from the ethnocentric vision of a nation whose racial purity has in some way been altered by an exclusively British occupation extending over a period of 800 years. These additions to the indigenous population number amongst them ethnic groups that are themselves part Celtic in their origins. They include Vikings, Norwegians, Danes, Normans, English, Scots, Welsh, Flemings, Huguenots, French, Palatine Germans, and Jews. The recognition of this diversity has an important bearing on new approaches to genealogy research, which seek to explore beyond the narrow ethnocentric, primogenital narrowness of traditional research and recognise a more inclusive multiethnic mix within the post-migratory Irish Diaspora. Thereafter the body of the work outlines the history and development of the Divisions of Ireland and the numerous depositories and likely sources of records, and concludes with a very useful analysis of the distribution of names throughout Ireland originally compiled in 1890 by the General Register Office.

In contrast, Smith's *A Guide to Tracing your Mayo Ancestors*,<sup>24</sup> is as the title suggests, aimed specifically at researchers who have already determined that their family roots lie in County Mayo. As such, as well as including the standard national sources outlined in most other guides, it illustrates in great detail sources which are unique to the county and as diverse as a list of subscribers to fund the purchase of a new organ for Killala Church of Ireland Cathedral in 1809, the 1839 Gaming Certificates List and, a list of Mayo persons residing in Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire), at the time of the 1901 Census. It also includes numerous county-based directories, journals and newspapers, and concludes with a very useful list of further readings relating to key events in County Mayo during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in which the reader may find resonances with personal reminiscences passed on from previous generations.

In *An Irish Roots Guide*, Tony McCarthy rejects the traditional route of following the narrow line of male descent to a more inclusive objective of researching all ancestral lines. In taking this path he has developed a research methodology based on the Pareto Principle, named after an Italian scientist, in which the most significant items in a given group constitute a relatively small proportion of the entire group (a concept more

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<sup>24</sup> B. Smith, *A Guide to Tracing your Mayo Ancestors* (Flyleaf Press, Dublin 1997).



commonly known as the 80/20 rule). Applying this principle, McCarthy concludes that 'in researching family history 80 per cent of the records refer to a mere 20 per cent of the people, and that the corollary, that only 20 per cent of all documentary material is relevant as far as 80 per cent of the people are concerned seems to be broadly true also'.<sup>25</sup>

McCarthy fine tunes his research by proposing that as a result of continuous restrictions on Irish trade and industry during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Irish population was very largely rural in nature by the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This is reflected in the 1841 census of Ireland in which 66% of the population of all Irish families were chiefly employed in agriculture and when added to the category 'chiefly engaged in agriculture plus proportion of other pursuits', results in a likely total of 73% of the population fitting this category.<sup>26</sup> He concludes that since the vast majority of the Irish population consisted of tenant farmers and their families, most Irish people at home and abroad are descended from this stock. From the two assertions above, McCarthy moves on to develop what he considers to be the twelve major sources of information which offer a reasonable possibility of yielding ancestral information concerning the Irish Catholic tenant farmer although only two of the record collections dealt with are exclusively agricultural and only one is exclusively Catholic.

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<sup>25</sup> T. McCarthy, *An Irish Roots Guide*, (Lilliput Press, Dublin. 1991), p. 16.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **Methodolgy**

### **Primary Research Objectives**

The main objective of the primary research is aimed at seeking out the opinions and observations of the major institutions and stakeholders who are directly engaged in the provision of genealogical services both in Ireland and internationally. The direct and indirect beneficiaries of those services include not only user groups or individuals pursuing family history research, but also other stakeholders who have either a direct or indirect beneficial interest in genealogy and genealogy tourism.

### **Service Providers, User Groups and Public Authorities**

For methodological purposes, service providers are defined as individuals, private and public companies and national institutions who collectively contribute to servicing the 'Genealogy Tourist' market. At the forefront of service provision are the Family History Centres which in Mayo are represented by the Mayo North and Mayo South Family History Centres affiliated to the Irish Family History Foundation, and the Clew Bay Heritage Centre which is managed by the Westport Archaeological and Historical Society. The Mayo County Library houses a local history section and provides genealogy researchers access to many important local and national archives. Genealogical records relating to County Mayo are also available at the National Library based in Dublin and at the General Register Office based in Roscommon.

Not directly concerned with genealogy exclusively, but nonetheless both services, providers and beneficiaries, are the heritage centres, museums, interpretive centres and other tourist destinations which contribute to the Cultural Tourism experience. They in turn are promoted by Fáilte Ireland (The Irish Tourist Board) through a network of tourist offices which in County Mayo are managed by a division of Fáilte Ireland West. Hospitality has a significant role to play in supporting genealogy tourism in that it underpins any holiday experience with the provision of hotels, guesthouses, restaurants, pubs, and entertainment.

Genealogy and its tourism potential, as outlined in Chapter One, has been encouraged by several government initiatives over the past 25 years (a phenomenon which is examined in more detail in Chapter Five). At a national level, the formation of the Irish Genealogy Project involved government departments, tourism agencies and regional and county interests. Tourism in general and genealogy tourism in particular has been a continuing feature of national, regional and local development plans – which in turn have

produced a significant corpus of publications which are identified and referred to in this study.

User groups are defined as individual societies and commercial interests who use genealogical data for private use or for financial and other rewards. The primary user group which represents the main focus in this study is that of the individual genealogy researchers who are pursuing family history research as a hobby or activity and have visited or plan to visit Ireland (County Mayo) to further that research. Other user groups are professional genealogists who undertake research on behalf of clients, private associations, family history societies, the legal profession and specialist publications on the subject of genealogy and family history.

### **Data Collection: Methodology.**

Primary data for this study was compiled using interview techniques, which took the form of both hardcopy questionnaires, electronic/web-based questionnaires, personal interviews, and two focus group sessions. The hardcopy questionnaires were taken at a number of locations in County Mayo over the summer months of 2006 (n=97). The electronic questionnaire was administered by the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology URL (n=175). Genealogy societies and publications were mailed with the website address and a covering note was included so as to explain the purpose and background of the research. Additional information was obtained by conducting a series of one-to-one interviews and from two focus groups with members of TIARA (The Irish Ancestral Research Association).

As well as questionnaires and interviews, information and data was also collected from numerous official reports and publications published by government departments, genealogical societies and associations, and non-government institutions. Extensive use was also made of newspapers, journals magazines and periodicals.

### **Hardcopy Questionnaire Design and Objectives**

The hardcopy questionnaire,<sup>1</sup> was designed to compare the key characteristics of 'Genealogy Tourists' visiting County Mayo with those of the general tourist population so as to determine what, if any, significant differences may exist between the two groups (thus leading to a better understanding of the specific needs and wants of the 'Genealogy Tourist' market). Questions relating to socio-economic, demographic, psychographic and

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix i.

geographical factors sought answers to key characteristics such as country of origin travel, accommodation, and budgetary limitations, as well as genealogy specific questions relating to the nature and experience of personal family history research

The hardcopy questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first two sections, Parts 'A' and 'B', were applicable to both general and 'Genealogy Tourists', and the third, Part 'C', was aimed specifically at the 'Genealogy Tourist'. Part 'A' sought demographic and socio-economic information from respondents, whilst Part 'B' looked for feedback on the respondents' travel and visit preferences and their qualitative observations about their holiday experiences. Part 'C', measured genealogists' experiences and expectations and some open-ended questions allowed the respondent to make observations and recommendations on the quality and availability of genealogical records and databases. The results of this survey are discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

The main locations selected for the distribution of the hardcopy questionnaires were tourist offices, visitor centres and family history centres. Visits were made to selected locations over the period from June 2006 to August 2006. The total sample covered 96 respondents, of which 45 identified themselves as 'General Tourists' and 51 as 'Genealogy Tourists'. The weighting was entirely due to the sampling methodology used, in which 'General Tourist' respondents were predominantly canvassed at tourist offices and visitor attractions and 'Genealogy Tourists' predominantly at the family history centres and Clew Bay Heritage Centre. In the cases of the North Mayo Centre and Clew Bay, direct interviews were possible but there being no adequate facilities in the South Mayo Centre, responses were collected by that centre from visitors at the reception area.

It would have been possible to collect significantly more 'General Tourist' responses than the sample size, particularly from the Westport Tourist Office which is the busiest in the county. However, since the main objective of the survey was to construct typical models of a 'Genealogy Tourist' as compared with the 'General Tourist', the balance selected seemed appropriate. Since for all practical purposes 'Genealogy Tourists' are mostly English-speaking, English-speaking 'General Tourists' were targeted in the tourist offices and visitor centres to maintain a balance between the two sets of data.

### **Electronic Questionnaire Design and Objectives**

The main purpose of the electronic (or web-based) questionnaire<sup>2</sup> was to compare the socio-economic, demographic, psychographic and geographical make up of the respondents to see if they differed in any way from the visitor profile obtained from the hard copy version and to determine if they were exclusively relying on the Internet for their research or used conventional search methods including visiting Irish sources. The survey was available online from June 2006 and although there were unfortunately some occasional website failures which may have affected the final total, there were still 175 respondents. Full results from this survey are dealt with in Chapter Six.

### **Focus Groups**

Two focus group sessions were held with members of the Boston-based The Irish Ancestral Research Association (TIARA) on the occasion of two of their annual research trips to Ireland. The first was held in Dublin in March 2006 and the second in Castlebar, County Mayo in May 2007. The participants in the first focus group in Dublin were asked to describe motivating factors which had encouraged them to undertake family history research and to comment on their research methodologies and locations and sources of data. Particular importance was attached to their experiences (if any) relating to the family history centres in Mayo and feedback was sought on the quality of the information they received. The second focus group in Castlebar took place following an extended visit by TIARA members to County Mayo, which included lectures and visits to a number of heritage sites and a preview of the research facilities at the Mayo County Library (which included Internet linkage to the family history centres). Group participants were asked to evaluate these facilities and to give a qualitative assessment of the way in which the heritage sites and museums portrayed Mayo's culture and heritage. Their comments and observations are quoted later on in this study.

### **Service Providers and Institutional Stakeholders**

Interviews were arranged during the winter and spring of 2006 with representatives from the genealogy sector, the tourism industry and from government institutions involved in providing financial and other support to promote genealogy research. The interviews were mostly on a one-to-one basis and were structured to give the interviewees as much scope as possible to comment on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix ii.

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genealogy industry, and its potential as a promotional vehicle for tourism. Relevant extracts from their comments and observations are included in the main body of the text.

### **Secondary Research**

In addition to the general literature reviewed in Chapter Two, extensive reference was made to the numerous reports from government and state agencies dealing with the Irish Genealogy Project. Much of the statistical data on tourism quoted in the main body of the text was obtained from the annual reports of Fáilte Ireland and Fáilte Ireland West, and from replies to specific requests for additional information made to those institutions' operational managers. In addition numerous genealogy-based magazines and journals were referred to in the course of the research as well as local and national newspapers and periodicals. A full list of all the above documents is included in the bibliography.



**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**The Anatomy of Genealogy: Its Nature,  
Meaning and Identity**



## Introduction

This chapter examines how the historical imperative to establish proven bloodlines, kinship structures and family ties through a male line of descent, have developed into a commercialised and commodified tourism-based industry. In modern times, elaborately produced volumes of family trees (often resplendent with computer designed crests and accompanied by customised mugs, cups, t-shirts, stationery, key rings, towels, and baseball caps) are all freely available products of this industry. The development of genealogy as a tourism activity is examined against the background of a burgeoning heritage industry in which private and state-funded interpretive centres, folk parks, museums and festivals seek to portray an 'Irish' cultural identity in order to meet the expectations of both the indigenous and the overseas tourists. This chapter also examines the attempts by both the state and the private sector in Ireland to encourage an estimated 70 million people of Irish descent worldwide, to visit the land of their forebears. These attempts were manifested in the state's general tourism policy but in particular, in the establishment of the institutions and bodies described in detail below. Their broad aim was to provide a mechanism whereby genealogical tourists could identify their ancestors who had left, to start a new life with improved opportunities in the developing economies of the Americas and the Antipodes, and be encouraged to come and visit the places and spaces where those ancestors were raised.

The chapter begins with an overview of the linkage between heritage and tourism, in which:

Heritage is a windfall which can be turned to account – the Blarney stone is just a piece of rock, the mud (of Ballyporeen) is just a piece of ground, and heritage becomes the magic ingredient which turns it into what economists call an 'added value product.'<sup>1</sup>

As will be shown later what started as a uniquely localised, community-driven enterprise, combining genuine concern to preserve the local parish records, gravestone locations and other records, was taken over by the Irish state as part of a national policy to develop Ireland's built, natural and cultural heritage into an industry labelled 'Heritage Tourism' where heritage is marketed and history is promoted for its entertainment value.

Prior to the 1970s interest in Irish heritage, both natural and cultural, was limited in the main to the activities of small groups and societies whose interests were very much

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<sup>1</sup> P.J. Duffy, "Conflicts in Heritage and Tourism", in U. Kockel (ed.), *Culture, Tourism and Development: The Case of Ireland* (Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 1994), p. 79.

confined to a narrow agenda, limited either geographically or topically, and very often determined by their membership. What was not on the agenda was any real attempt to generate a broad nationwide and overseas appreciation of the richness of the Irish natural and cultural legacy or the need for its conservation. If there was a defining moment in creating an awareness of the potential threat to this legacy then it perhaps arrived with the discovery of the largest Viking settlement in Western Europe at Wood Quay, Dublin in the 1968. This discovery came about during excavation of the site to build the new City Hall. The decision by the then Dublin Corporation to continue the building programme after some limited archaeological investigation, galvanised a popular nationwide protest against what was seen as cultural vandalism perpetrated by the state. More importantly as Ireland began to develop its infrastructure with substantial structural funding from the European Union, there was a growing awareness of potential threats to other national treasures. The increased activity of watchdog organisations such as An Taisce, and also of a burgeoning number of locally-based societies which were formed around the country for the purpose of ensuring the preservation of this legacy is ample evidence of this. Examples of the battles which have been fought in this regard are to be found in the community-driven legal challenges to the development of Carrickmines Castle which were commenced in 2003 and in the controversy surrounding the routing of the M3 close to the Hill of Tara which came to the fore in 2005.

Many of Ireland's high profile examples of natural and cultural heritage, such as Newgrange, the Hill of Tara, or the Ring of Kerry, have attracted tourists as far back as the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the tradition of the Grand Tour was in vogue. But these visitors were wealthy, often aristocratic, and by definition few in number. The growth in mass tourism from the 1970s onwards, particularly to the 'sun, sea and sand' destinations of the Mediterranean, brought a growing awareness, in particular to the Irish Tourism Board, 'Bord Fáilte', that since Ireland lacked the natural advantages of the Mediterranean, it needed to identify and promote its own natural advantages. Ireland's landscape, virtually untouched since the end of the ice-age, and countless monuments and other structures dating back over 5000 years, presented an obvious case for development and promotion. The heritage tourism business had arrived.

New and innovative heritage tourism attractions such as folk parks, interpretative centres, heritage farms, and craft centres were incentivised by the promise of grant aid from the European Structural Funds, particularly in the 1990s. These grants were generally made available for schemes which created new infrastructure, were tourism-

based, and were job creating. Not all such developments were inclusively embraced by local communities. Some proposals were objected to by sections of the local communities who valued their cultural inheritance for its own sake (for example, Mulloughmore in County Clare), which became a divisive issue amongst the community, where many supported the proposal. But generally over the past 30 years most communities in rural Ireland have developed some form of visitor attraction based around one or more of their previously neglected natural or cultural treasures. As part of this activity some local history societies began to gather and collate local parish records of births, marriages and deaths with the intention of providing a local community-based genealogical database.

### **The Historical Development of Irish Genealogy from Earliest Times**

The practice and study of genealogy, which could be thought of as the history of the descent of families, is a universal activity which assumes more or less importance depending on the prevailing social, economic, cultural or political environment. In Ireland its importance can be traced back to early historical times when, in Gaelic Ireland the legal and social unit was represented by the '*fine*'. This unit consisted of a population which could trace back its ancestry, via the male line of descent, to a common great-grandfather. As well as the legal and economic importance which this unit represented, proof of being a *bona fide* member was clearly an imperative. Moreover, the *rí* or king of this group was decided not by the later medieval Anglo-Norman practice of *primo genitor*, but by election by the group.

Prior to the development of writing, the preservation of the genealogical record of the *fine* was undoubtedly an oral tradition but there are limitations to the extent to which orally preserved genealogies can be accurately maintained. Studies by A.I. Richards into African oral traditions suggest that six or at the utmost eight generations may be the maximum and then only in the most settled social and economic conditions.<sup>2</sup> Since the *fine* worked back four generations the oral tradition was even at that point reaching the boundaries of a credible and accurate genealogical record. Although the oral tradition continued to be an important facet of Gaelic culture until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a written record of Gaelic genealogies began to be compiled during the seventh century. The model for compiling these genealogies was almost certainly taken from that of the children of Israel found in the Bible – the two basic models used being a single ancestral line of an

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<sup>2</sup> See K. Nicholls, "Genealogy", in N. Buttimer, C. Rynne and H. Guerin (eds.), *The Heritage of Ireland* (Collins Press, Cork, 2000), pp. 156-61.

individual, and listings of the offspring of a particular individual.<sup>3</sup> This format continued to be the basic model from the sixth or seventh centuries until the effective collapse of Gaelic Ireland in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The Irish genealogical texts occupy a unique place in European literature in that they span a period extending from the seventh until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, although what remains today can only be a small portion of the original corpus. Most of the genealogical manuscripts were destroyed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The collapse of Gaelic society and the effective imposition of English law also meant that for all practical purposes these documents no longer had any legal status. This process of loss continued throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the survival of some texts existing today only as copies made in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> Although, as previously stated, Gaelic Irish society effectively came to an end by the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, the genesis of its eventual collapse began with the Anglo-Norman invasion of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Apart from the political and social implications of this event the clash of cultures was to have a profound effect on both societies. The rights, laws and obligations of Gaelic society between the *rí* or king were based on blood and family ties supported by a largely oral legal system of Brehon law. By contrast the rights, laws and obligations of members of the Norman feudal society were based on a codified structure of laws in which blood ties had no place. However members of both cultural systems shared common ground in the necessity to prove any legal claim they may have had, by virtue of a proven pedigree of ancestral rights.

Both genealogical systems continued to be maintained in parallel throughout the turbulent Middle Ages, even though the Anglo-Norman culture was effectively absorbed during those times into Gaelic Ireland. However, following the Tudor imposition of English laws and customs in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, the two parallel genealogical records began to be integrated, largely because of the political settlement offered to the ruling Gaelic aristocracy. Under this settlement which came to be known as 'surrender and re-grant', every important ruler whether of native Irish or of Old English descent was induced to make a formal agreement with the English crown by which he promised to observe English law, and to surrender his lands to the crown and receive them back to be held by knight-service. Surrender and re-grant effectively created a 'new' aristocracy in

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

Ireland comprising both native Irish and Old English families (the latter were descended from the Anglo-Normans). Thus, for example, O'Neill became the Earl of Tyrone and O'Brien, the Earl of Thomond. For the native Irish this meant a fundamental change. Under Gaelic Law a chief's right in the lands that he ruled was a limited life interest and there was no succession by primogeniture. In the provisions of the settlement the native Irish Chiefs saw an opportunity to establish direct succession in their own families by primogeniture, which was in turn to lead to an interest in the genealogy of their families.

Prior to this major change from Gaelic to effectively Anglo Irish aristocracy, coats of arms and other such paraphernalia were alien to the native Irish culture. Even in English feudal and medieval society, the granting of coats of arms had very little to do with genealogy and coats of arms had originated from a necessity to be recognised in battle. The administration of this system was undertaken by the College of Arms in London.

In 1552 the office of the Ulster King of Arms was established to integrate the arms and pedigrees of Gaelic and Norman families. From the start its function was largely heraldic and what little genealogy was involved entailed the establishment of the rights of the families concerned to legally hold and use their coats of arms. It appears that during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries many of the office holders saw the appointment as a sinecure and paid little regard to the accurate keeping of records and storage of manuscripts. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Sir William Betham was appointed to the post and from that point on the collection and care of manuscripts was placed on a proper footing.<sup>5</sup>

In 1943 the office became the Genealogical Office attached to the National Library of Ireland and the Ulster King of Arms became the Chief Herald of Ireland. The government order changing the status of the office did not explicitly empower the Chief Herald to grant arms. This has recently been highlighted by the Garter King of Arms in London, Peter Gwynne-Jones. Arms have been granted to Presidents Kennedy and Clinton and other prominent national and international visitors which may have no legal status. A private members bill before the Seanad drawn up by the Genealogical Society of Ireland may clear up the confusion. Although the title of the office suggests that it engages in genealogical research, its principal role today continues to be heraldic and it does not undertake family history research.

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<sup>5</sup> J. Grenham, *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors* 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, (Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1992), p. 72.

### The Origins of the Irish Diaspora

The history outlined above concerns an understanding of bloodlines and family ties which were largely, if not exclusively, designed to serve the needs of a privileged and property-owning class. Although the policy of surrender and re-grant initially recognised Gaelic Irish entitlement to ancient tenure, the imposition of successive plantations and the effective destruction of the Gaelic order during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries dispossessed most of the tenants and land owners who had previously had their rights to tenure protected by ancient law and custom. The tradition of emigration from Ireland has its roots in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century flight from an increasingly hostile English occupation leading to many Irishmen serving in European armies and the more adventurous, developing business interests in the emerging territories of the New World.

Ironically, given that the catalyst for this migration was the effective colonisation of Ireland by the English during the establishment of the British Empire,<sup>6</sup> Irish emigrants who subsequently settled in North America became part of, and benefited from, the continuation and expansion of that colonising process at a global level. The parallels cannot be avoided that this time it was the Native Americans whose land was seized and culture destroyed and the African slaves who lost both their land and liberty. It is asserted that hundreds of thousands of slaves were owned by people of Irish extraction between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>7</sup> In a further ironic twist, Daniel O'Connell in his campaign for the repeal of the Union, had drawn parallels between the oppressive conditions endured by Irish farm labourers and American slaves. This linkage had enraged some sections of Irish-Americans who were affiliated to the pro-slavery Democratic Party and many Repeal organisations, particularly in the South disbanded their organisations with the consequent loss of much needed funds which they had previously raised to finance O'Connell's campaign.<sup>8</sup>

Another form of slavery, that of the transportation of indentured servants from Ireland to the New World and the shipping of convicted civil and criminal convicts, led to the emergence of significant numbers of Irish-born migrants in the colonies, particularly

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<sup>6</sup> A. Bielenberg, "Irish Emigration to the British Empire, 1700-1914", in A. Bielenberg, (ed.) *The Irish Diaspora* (Pearson Education, Harlow, 2000), p. 215.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 215.

<sup>8</sup> D. B. Quinn, *Ireland and America: Their Early Associations, 1500-1640* (Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 1991).

south of New England and the West Indies. It is estimated that upwards of 250,000 to 400,000 migrants in these categories left Ireland between 1700 and 1776.<sup>9</sup>

Although many left the country the majority were reduced to becoming tenants of the new owners of their lands. 'Until the Famine it was by no means uncommon for poor peasants in mud cabins to make wills bequeathing estates which had long ago been confiscated from their forefathers.'<sup>10</sup> This disenfranchised and dispossessed population was to form the nucleus of the mass emigrations of the population in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, occasioned by the failure of the potato crop and the resultant Famine. Although some emigration took place directly from Ireland, the bulk of the emigrants left for a new life via English ports and in particular from London and Liverpool.

The following extract taken from the *Illustrated London News* in July 1850 is a contemporary account of this extraordinary mass migration which served to both decimate the Irish population and ultimately enrich the populations and cultures of much of the English speaking world:

The great tide of emigration flows steadily westward. The principal emigrants are Irish peasants and labourers. It is calculated that a least four out of every five persons who leave the shores of the old country to try their fortunes in the new, are Irish. Since the fatal years of the potato famine and the cholera, the annual numbers of emigrants have gone on increasing, until they have become so great as to suggest the idea, and almost justify the belief, of the gradual depopulation of Ireland. The colonies of Great Britain offer powerful attractions to the great bulk of the English and Scottish emigrants who forsake their native land to make homes in the wilderness. But the Irish emigration flows with full force upon the United States. Though many of the Irish emigrants are, doubtless, persons of small means, who have been hoarding and saving for years and living in rags and squalor, in order to amass sufficient money to carry themselves and families across the Atlantic, and to beg their way to the Western states, where they may 'squat' or purchase cheap lands, the great bulk appear to be people of the most destitute class, who join their friends and relatives, previously established in America.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See W. J. Smyth, *Map-making, Landscapes and Memory: A Geography of Colonial and Early Modern Ireland c. 1530-1750* (Cork University Press, Cork, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> C. Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger* (The New English Library, London, 1965), p. 21.

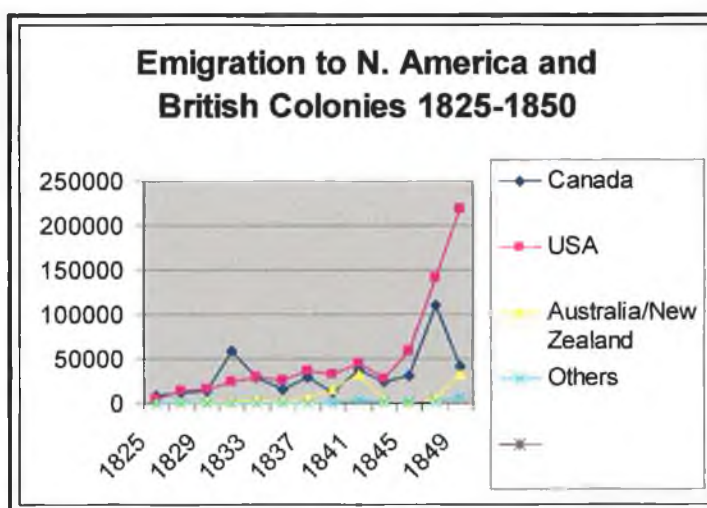
<sup>11</sup> *The Illustrated London News*, 6 July 1850.



**Figure 4.1 The Embarkation: Waterloo Docks, Liverpool.**

Source: *Illustrated London News*, 6 July 1850

Figure 4.2 below gives an indication of total emigration of all British subjects over the period 1825-1850. The chart indicates a steady increase in migration during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century driven by the ‘pull’ factors of the chance of a better life and better prospects offered by the developing economies of the Americas and the British colonies. This was particularly true of emigration to British North America (Canada) as illustrated in Figure 4.2. The growth in the export of timber from Canada to Britain from the end of the Napoleonic Wars led to a significant overcapacity of tonnage leaving British ports for the return journey.



**Figure 4.2 Emigration to North America and The British Colonies, 1825-1850**

Source: Compiled from data in *Illustrated London News*, 6 July 1850

This capacity was used up by offering cheap fares on the return journey back to Canada.

As a result, an estimated 500,000 Irish emigrants left to settle in Canada by 1845. Although the USA became the major destination for emigrants during the Famine years to



1850, nonetheless a further 26,000 left for Canada in 1846 and an unprecedented 90,000 in 1847.<sup>12</sup>

Figure 4.3 below summarises the total emigration flow from Great Britain during the period 1825-1850. Although this chart indicates that emigration was not an exclusively Irish phenomenon, the data has to be viewed on the basis that 80% of the total emigration to the USA and Canada was from the island of Ireland.

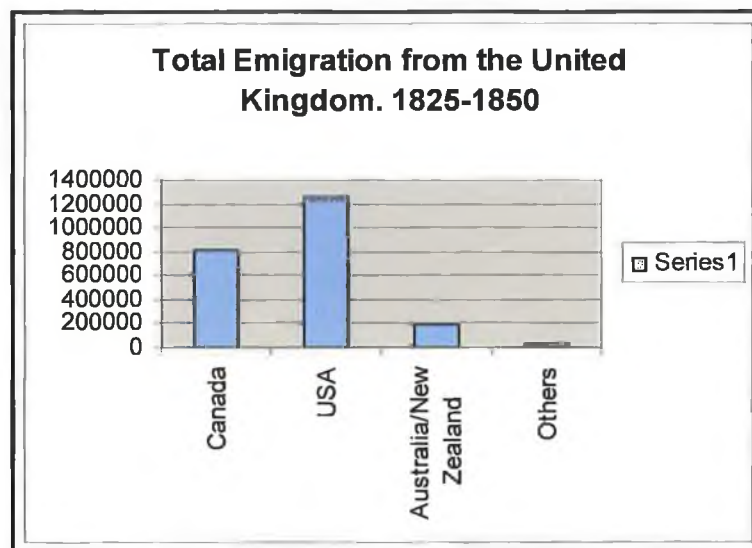


Figure 4.3 Total Emigration from the United Kingdom, 1825-1850.

Source: Compiled from data in *Illustrated London News*, 6 July 1850

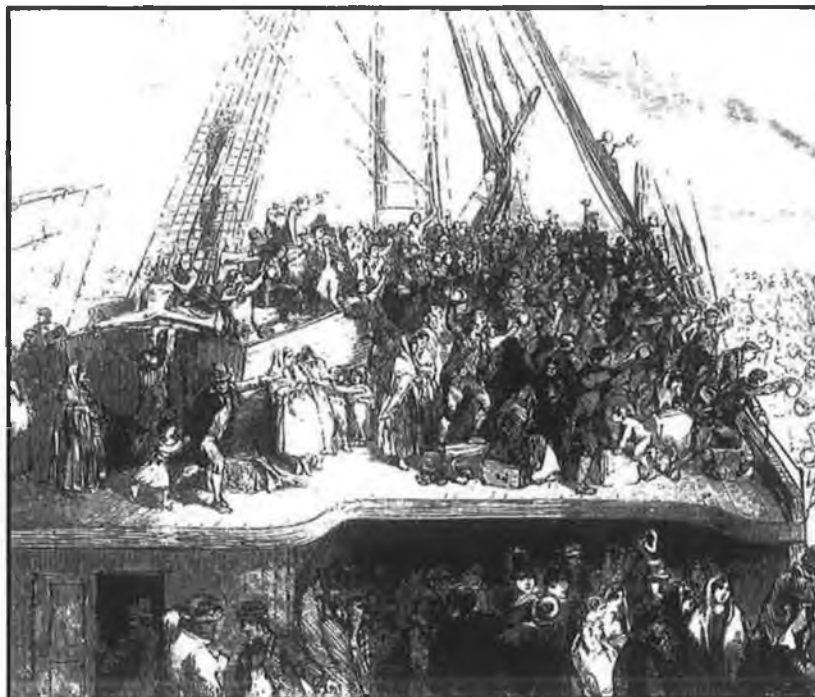
This nucleus, added to by a continuing tradition of emigration until the late 1980s, resulted in an estimated 70 million people worldwide claiming Irish descent with over 30 million living in the United States alone. The significant increase in Irish genealogical and family history research in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was fuelled by the interest and curiosity that the descendants of these emigrants showed about their roots. The reasons and motives for this are explored later.

### The Irish Diaspora

The definition of the Irish Diaspora which appears to be preferred by the Irish government is a body of people of Irish nationality habitually resident outside of the island of Ireland. This includes Irish citizens who have emigrated abroad, and their children, who are Irish citizens by descent. It also includes their grandchildren in cases where the grandchildren were registered as Irish citizens in the Foreign Births Register held in every Irish diplomatic mission. Under this definition, the Irish Diaspora is

<sup>12</sup> Bielenberg, *op. cit.* p. 219.

considerably smaller than is popularly imagined, comprising some 3 million persons of whom 1.2 million are Irish-born immigrants. However, the popular understanding of the Irish Diaspora extends beyond this narrow definition to include all those who claim Irish descent which extends beyond citizen status.



**Figure 4.4 The Leaving of Liverpool.**

**Source: Illustrated London News, 6 July 1850**

Under this broader understanding the Irish Diaspora consists of Irish emigrants and their descendants in countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, the EU, and the Caribbean, comprising an estimated 70 million persons worldwide. Although this wider definition does not bestow any legal status on this extended membership, nonetheless Article 2 of the Irish Constitution was amended in 1998 to read that “the Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage”.<sup>13</sup>

### **Principal Settlements of the Irish Diaspora**

#### *North America*

The 2000 US census reported 30,528,492 persons claiming Irish ancestry – 10.8% of the population. In Canada a further 3.8 million claim Irish descent out of a population of 32

<sup>13</sup> Government of Ireland, *Bunreacht na hÉireann/Constitution of Ireland* (Government of Ireland, Dublin, 1937-2002), p. 4.

million.<sup>14</sup> Prior to the American War of Independence, the British Empire included North America. The push factors for migration to North America at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century were significantly different to the mass exodus of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Religious intolerance, expressed in the form of the Penal Laws, may have given the movement some impetus but at the same time the growing economies of the thirteen states needed labourers, artisans, skilled workers and small farmers in order to develop their infrastructure. In addition Irish merchants were attracted to the commercial opportunities of this developing economy. The resultant transatlantic trade which exchanged raw materials from America, for provisions and finished goods, particularly Irish linen, established direct links from Irish ports along the main migrant routes to the colonies. At the outbreak of the American War of Independence it is estimated that the Irish in America numbered between 350,000-450,000 and this core population acted as a magnet which drew their friends and relatives to follow them.

This relatively orderly migration began to gather pace from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the indigenous, largely disenfranchised Irish population, particularly on the Western seaboard saw emigration as an opportunity to start a new life in a less intolerant and potentially more rewarding environment. The single most concentrated mass movement of Irish emigration to North America took place during the Famine years between 1845 and 1850. An estimated one million Irish men, women and children emigrated from Ireland leaving behind a further million dead of starvation and disease. The extent of this mass migration in the context of the previous decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is illustrated in Figure 4.5

The tradition of Irish emigration was of course to continue unabated throughout the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and indeed until the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The arrival of the so-called Celtic Tiger in the 1990s more than merely halted emigration on any real scale but began a process of inward immigration not just by returning Irish people but also by a new wave of immigrants from the economically disadvantaged accession states of an enlarged European Union.

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<sup>14</sup> *The Irish Times* Supplement, 23 June 2006.

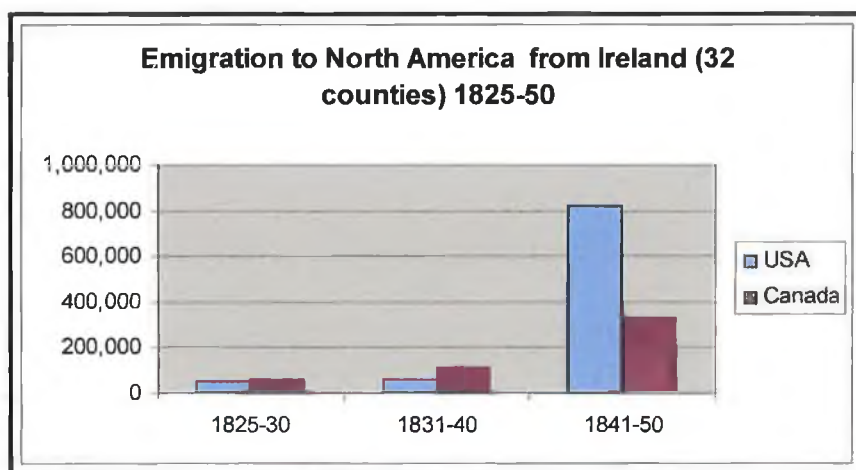


Figure 4.5 Irish Migration to North America, 1800-1920.

Source: D. H. Akenson, "Irish Migration to North America, 1800-1920", in A. Bielenberg (ed.) *The Irish Diaspora* (Pearson Education, Harlow, 2000), p. 123.

### *Australia*

Irish-Australians are the second largest ethnic group in Australia, numbering 1,919,727 or 9.0% of respondents to the 2001 Census. After the colonisation of Australia, Irish emigrants began arriving towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, attracted by the promise of a new land, but many were involuntary emigrants, being convicts transported to the new penal colony of New South Wales which had been founded in 1788 by the British following the loss of the American colonies after the American War of Independence. From 1788 to 1853 when transportation ceased, around 40,000 convicts were transported directly from Ireland, with a further 8,000 of Irish birth transported from Britain. By the 1830s Irish born inhabitants accounted for about a quarter of the colony's population.<sup>15</sup>

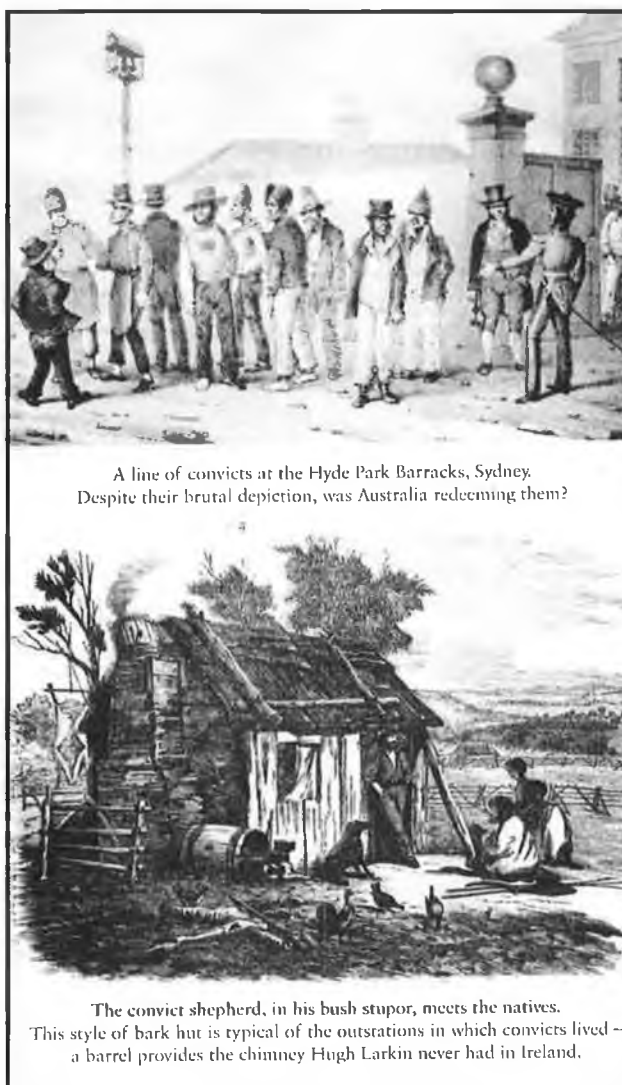
In some areas the Irish immigrants found themselves in a not too dissimilar social and cultural environment then that which they had left in Ireland. Under a scheme known as 'Special Surveys' introduced by the New South Wales government in 1841, well capitalised settlement schemes were encouraged to develop what amounted to new urban development. One such settlement was developed by James Atkinson, an Armagh-born Sidney-based lawyer of Anglo-Irish descent. His development, which he named Belfast, mirrored the 'progressive' developments of 19<sup>th</sup> century Anglo-Irish landlords which included the erection of a school, Customs House, Court House, Gaol, and Church.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Bielenberg, *op. cit.* p. 220.

<sup>16</sup> L. Proudfoot and D. Hall, "Memory and Identity in 'Irish' Australia: Constructing Alerity in Belfast (Port Fairy), 1857-1873", in M. McCarthy (ed.), *Ireland's Heritages: Critical Perspectives in Memory and Identity* (Ashgate Publishing Ltd., Aldershot, 2005), p. 92.

Moreover, as an absentee landlord he appointed a land agent to manage the day to day affairs in a manner which closely mirrored that which was practised by land agents back in Ireland:

Atkinson...adopted the cornacre system among his agricultural small holders. These forms of tenure would have been immediately familiar to the Irish tenantry and perhaps redolent for them of the contested landlord-tenant relations that they had left behind in Ireland. These arrangements created the sense of social inequality which recent anthologies of Irish migrant correspondence have indicated constituted a major motive for emigration for some migrants. The 'transmitted cultural memory' adapted by Atkinson as landlord to meet the social and cultural conditions he encountered in the Port Phillip district...may have signified other, equally powerful forms of cultural memory for the Irish emigrants who settled there.<sup>17</sup>



**Figure 4.6 Conviction and Deportation**

Source: T. Keneally, *The Great Shame and the Triumph of the Irish in the English Speaking World* (Doubleday, New York, 1999), p. 236.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

The second and more dramatic wave of Irish migration to Australia occurred after the 1850s with the discovery of gold at Ballarat in Victoria in 1851. Some 84,000 Irish arrived in the Australian colonies in the 1850s, eclipsing the 15,000 Irish emigrants arriving in Victoria during the Famine years. Between 1840 and 1914, 300,000 Irish free settlers had arrived. The colonial census of 1891 accounted for 228,232 Irish-born respondents. Post 1922 migration from the South of Ireland continued as the Irish Free State retained Dominion status and Irish citizens were thus British subjects. Even after 1949, when Ireland became a Republic and left the commonwealth, Irish citizens born prior to that date remained British subjects and were thus eligible for assisted passage. Although emigration has significantly reduced since 1960, Australia, nonetheless, remains a country of choice for Irish visitors seeking work experience. According to the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs *White Paper on Foreign Policy*, there were 213,000 Irish citizens in Australia in 1997.

#### *New Zealand*

By 1871 the Irish represented 20% of New Zealand's immigrant population but this had fallen to 10% by the turn of the century. There is little literature about, or study of, the Irish in New Zealand, possibly due to the relatively small numbers of migrants compared to the major destinations outlined in Figure 4.3 above. Most migrants arrived between 1871 and 1885, lured by a range of financial inducements. Most of the emigrants during this period came from Munster (45.63 per cent) and Ulster (35.83 per cent). In 2001, 11,708 defined their ethnicity as Irish and 1,515 as Celtic, out of a population of 4,000,000.<sup>18</sup>

#### *Britain*

Three quarters of the Irish-born who are living abroad are in Britain. In addition, some 1.7 million are born to Irish parents, while the third generation Irish community could number six million.<sup>19</sup> Many of the characteristics of Irish emigration to Britain were unique to the Irish Diaspora. Its close proximity to Ireland meant that communication and contact with the homeland was relatively easy and also represented an ever present opportunity to return either temporarily or permanently. This was certainly true of the thousands of seasonal labourers who travelled 'across the water' each year. There is very

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<sup>18</sup> *The Irish Times* Supplement, 23 June 2006.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

little statistical analysis of movement during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, because following the Act of Union of 1800, the members of the Irish population were effectively British subjects. But some measure of movement can be deduced from estimates of the growth of Irish workers in the main industrial towns and cities of the North of England and Scotland. In Glasgow, estimates of the number of Irish Catholics rose from 8,000 in 1819 to 31,000 in 1831. There were believed to be over 100,000 Irish in Lancashire drawn to the burgeoning cotton industry and to Liverpool, one of the major ports of embarkation for emigrants to the English speaking world. The 1841 Census of Irish-born living in Britain recorded a figure of 415,000. The figure peaked at 806,000 in 1861. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the total of Irish born, and second and third generation Irish exceeded 1,000,000.<sup>20</sup>

### *South America*

There are estimated to be between 300,000 to 500,000 people of Irish descent living in South America, with most of them resident in Argentina, but they are also to be found in Mexico, Central America, Uruguay, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Peru.<sup>21</sup>

Unlike the mass waves of emigration to North America and the Antipodes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, emigration to Argentina, albeit on a much smaller scale, had commenced much earlier as part of the colonisation of South America by predominantly Spanish military expeditions. Many Irish exiles from prominent families, denied education and careers in Ireland because of the anti-Catholic penal laws, went to Europe, particularly France and Spain to complete their education. Many then stayed to build formidable careers in both the civil service and the armed forces. As Spain pursued its colonial ambitions in South America Irish ex-patriots became prominent participants of that process, and were in the forefront of building the early infrastructure of a number of modern South American states, notably Argentina. By the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, names such as Lynch, O’Gorman, Dogan, Cullen, O’Ryan and Butler figured prominently amongst the leading merchants of Buenos Aires.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> G. Davis, “The Irish in Britain, 1815-1939 in A. Bielenberg”, (ed.) *The Irish Diaspora* (Pearson Education, Harlow, 2000), p. 20.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> P. McKenna, Irish Emigration to Argentina: A Different Model, in A Bielenberg, (ed.), *The Irish Diaspora*, (Pearson Education, Harlow, 2000), p. 197.

Commercial expansion of agriculture and cattle breeding, encouraged by Spain, attracted these merchants and traders to exploit these new opportunities. The large-scale development of the beef trade at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century required skills which could not be met by the local population, but Irish skills in salting, tanning and butchery were well-known in Spain because of the long-established trading connections with Galway and other Irish port cities. As a result, skilled workers were recruited from Ireland during the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, thus generating the nucleus of the Argentine beef industry. It is estimated that between 40,000 and 45,000 Irish people emigrated to Argentina during the 19<sup>th</sup> century although many were to migrate onwards – principally to the USA.

### **The Development of the Genealogical Industry on the Island of Ireland**

Prior to the 1970s, genealogical research had been the preserve of a few full time professional genealogists, including staff in the office of the Chief Herald of Ireland. No accurate data is available for the volume of enquiries or research undertaken at that time. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Public Records Office, the General Records Office, the National Library, and local heritage centres began to experience an increase in direct enquiries from relatives seeking to trace their ancestors.

The influences which stimulated this growth are explored in more detail later but they coincided with significant demographic and economic changes in both Europe and America post World War II. These influences included more leisure time, earlier retirement, greater affluence, and cheaper air travel, which began to be a feature of mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century western culture. These factors coincided with a ‘re-discovery’ of the island of Ireland by the descendants of emigrants, particularly from North America. Hollywood interpretations of an idyllic rural landscape were projected by films such as *The Quiet Man* (1952), starring John Wayne and Maureen O’Hara. The director, John Ford, was himself one of 13 children of an Irish emigrant. The film was a complex mix of re-worked Irish mythology but the central character, a successful emigrant returning to his birthplace, rang many chords amongst upwardly mobile third generation Irish descendants. Later in the decade, *Darby O’Gill and the Little People*, produced by Walt Disney and directed by Robert Stevenson, had a similar impact weaving as it did Irish folklore and Irish Catholic imagery into a seamless portrayal of fact and fantasy in rural Ireland. These and similar products of the 1950s and early 1960s, whilst projecting an ‘American stage Irish’ view of rural Irish life, nonetheless stimulated a new interest in



Irishness amongst the Irish communities in North America, and to a lesser extent, amongst the rest of the Irish Diaspora in the English speaking world. A further boost was provided by the visit to Ireland of President Kennedy in 1963 who re-established his Irish roots by visiting his Irish relatives and made it fashionable for Irish-Americans to be interested in, and proud of, their roots.

Clare Heritage Centre at Corofin was one of the earliest locally-based centres to adapt to the increased demand for information and data from descendants of the emigrants who left Ireland during the period of mass emigration during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1979, a retired school teacher, Mr. Noise Cleary established what is now the Clare Heritage Centre and set up a genealogy centre for Clare, with the objective of indexing parish and other local records. This initial initiative spread to other local heritage and historical societies and by the early 1980s had spread out to cover most areas of the island of Ireland.

In the late 1970s, very high levels of unemployment particularly amongst school leavers had prompted government agencies dealing with training and employment to broaden their remit to include projects deemed to have historical or archaeological merit. AnCo, the forerunner of FÁS, operated a scheme which would allow local-based initiatives to recruit suitable trainees to gain work experience in office procedures and practice. In the early 1980s, the scheme was promoted nationally by the Federation of Local History Societies and local historical societies applied to join the scheme. The successful ones received employment grants, thus enabling them to hire additional staff to assist in accelerating the rate at which local records were being indexed.

The common interests and objectives shared by these independent societies quickly became clear to the individual society members. It became evident that their best interests would be served by forming an organisation to consolidate their mutual aims and objectives and provide a central focus point to develop a national network by adopting and incorporating the rapidly expanding information technology resources. The commercial and revenue generating opportunities which these services could provide was not overlooked in this process. In 1984, many of these groups, in association with individuals who were interested in this work came together to form the Irish Family History Society (IFHS). The IFHS saw its role as developing standard procedures for indexing records and facilitating the development of contacts and links between the various interested parties.

In parallel, but mutually exclusive from these developments, the concept of a centralised data bank to assist ancestral research was developed by the Department of Computer Science, Trinity College Dublin in 1982. At the time the developers foresaw that the viability of collating and indexing government, parish and other records would demand considerable resources which were beyond the means of the department. However they envisaged that if the scheme could be developed on a community employment basis with adequate up front state funding, then the project would not only be viable but could become a paying if not a highly profitable proposition. In 1984 the Industrial Development Authority awarded the research team a Feasibility Study Grant of 50% of the anticipated costs of IR£9,000 for the completion of a formal research project. The full report, entitled *Ancestral Research Project*, comprised a feasibility study and recommended the undertaking of a pilot project at a total cost of IR£350,000. It was completed in December 1984 and circulated to a limited selection of qualified institutions and individuals.

At the time of its publication, the proposal had the broad support of a number of state institutions including the Genealogical Office, Bord Fáilte, The Youth Employment Agency AnCo, The Industrial Development Authority, Coras Tráchtála and the National Development Corporation. However the up-front costs of data collection and processing on a national scale proved to be beyond the available resources at the time and the project did not proceed beyond the recommendation stage.

### **The Development of a National Genealogical Project**

By 1987 the IFHS had developed into a largely academic society and the indexing centres recognised that their shared range of concerns and interests would best be served by forming an umbrella organisation specifically dedicated to the needs of the genealogy centres. A major development influencing this proposal was the opportunity to access the expertise and research developed in 1984 at Trinity College Dublin, into the establishment of a national database of genealogical records from state, church and private sources. These proposals, although not progressed to field trials, were circulated to interested parties including the IFHS. In 1987 the primary consultant to the development programme, Ancestral Research Dublin, developed a joint proposal with the genealogical centres, to establish a National Genealogical Project (NGP) managed and administered by a new organisation, the Irish Family History Society Co-Operative (IFHSC).

The key objectives of the NGP were to establish and develop a profit-making genealogical service which would provide individual traces and related material in family and local histories and to promote the service internationally. Downstream developments were also included in the proposals which included promotion and development of ethnic tourism, development of a mail order service for the marketing of ancillary products with an emphasis on craft industries and related enterprises, and the maintenance and development of databases in co-operation with local communities. The proposals also included engagement in research and development for product and service improvement and diversification, and for the stimulation of innovation at a local level and the preservation of valuable state and other records in a readily accessible form for posterity.

The declared objectives of the IFHSC were to promote and establish independent and semi-autonomous societies in centres in strategic locations throughout the country which would provide a personalised genealogical service on a standardised basis in order to induce and encourage local tourism, stimulate local enterprise and contribute to the prosperity of the community.<sup>23</sup> As well as setting agreed standards and procedures, the proposed society saw its role as improving and developing its products and services nationally.

In order to protect the long term viability of the NGP it was also proposed that the IFHSC would take a majority shareholding in Ancestral Research Dublin and that it be incorporated as a limited liability company. From its inception the NGP was seen as an island of Ireland initiative and the proposals for both the project and the formation of the IFHSC were developed in conjunction with the Ulster Historical Foundation of Northern Ireland (UHFNI).

In 1988, a government initiative saw the setting up of a Tourism Task Force which had a Roots and Tourism sub-committee. The sub-committee had a wide membership drawn from the Taoiseach's Department, tourism agencies, national repositories, commercial genealogists and local genealogy centres. In 1989, through the work of the sub-committee, the IGP came to the attention of the Irish government as representing an opportunity to extend and upgrade genealogy as a tourism product. The project was also recognised as a viable cross-border initiative and the Northern Ireland administration became involved. A management group emerged, co-ordinated by the Taoiseach's Department and containing representatives of the two governments and their tourism,

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<sup>23</sup> See Appendix iii for a map of the location and geographical coverage of IFHF centres throughout Ireland.

training and employment agencies, public repositories and the Irish Family History Co-Operative. In 1990 the IFHSC was reconstituted as the Irish Family History Foundation (IFHF). Funding for development of the project came from the Taoiseach's Department, the European Community Structural Fund, The International Fund for Ireland and Shannon Free Airport Development Company (SFADCO). Training and work experience programmes for staff engaged in collating and indexing in the foundations centres was to be funded by An Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS), the State Training Authority and successor to AnCo.

The management group proceeded to conduct discussions with other interested parties and in particular with The Association of Professional Genealogists of Ireland (APGI), established in 1988 to represent individual commercial genealogists operating in the Republic and the Association of Ulster Genealogists and Record Agents (AUGRA).

The position of the AGPI in relation to the establishment of genealogical centres had been submitted to the Taoiseach's Task Force in 1988. Not unreasonably, AGPI members had expressed some concerns that the proposal to subsidise the indexing of records by the Family History Centres and to promote them internationally via Bord Fáilte was in effect fostering unfair competition against the professional sector. They also expressed serious doubts about the IGP projections of business growth in this sector which forecasted that the expected revenues generated from the increased business would lead to financial self sufficiency for each individual centre and a net gain in employment.

Notwithstanding the conflicting interests of the principal information providers to the project, a co-ordinating committee to progress the project was established in 1990 under the overall chairmanship of the Department of the Taoiseach as a continuation of its chairmanship of the Task Force on Genealogy and Tourism. In order to accommodate a wide range of potential interest groups the co-ordinating committee consisted of the following organisations.

- Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS)
- Bord Fáilte
- Shannon Free Airport Development Company (SFADCO)
- National Library of Ireland (NLI)
- Genealogical Office of Ireland (GO)
- General Record Office (GRO)
- National Archives (NA)
- Association of Professional Genealogists in Ireland (APGI)
- Irish Family History Foundation (IFHF)

In addition representatives from the public and private sectors from Northern Ireland were also included. This structure and its effectiveness in progressing the aims and objectives of the project came under close scrutiny by the Comptroller and Auditor General in 1996.<sup>24</sup> The principal findings of his report indicate that progress in achieving the aims and objectives of the project was adversely affected by fundamental weaknesses in the structure of the organisation. No formal terms of reference were developed to guide the committee and although individual members were committed in principle to the concept of the project they perceived that their key role was representing the interests of their sponsoring bodies. Given that in some cases these were conflicting interests, as was the case with IFHF and the AGPI, co-operation and compromise on many issues was slow to emerge. The four principal public offices, The NLI, GRO, GO, and the NA were present in an advisory capacity with no financial or other vested interests. The three semi-state bodies involved in the project, FÁS, SFADCO and Bord Fáilte, although providing financial support, did not assume any responsibility for developing the scheme or achieving its aims and objectives.

FÁS's main interest was in providing training and subsequently placing trainees in permanent full time employment. The indexing programme, whilst providing an opportunity to acquire computer literacy and keyboard skills, formed only 50% of the overall content of the training course. FÁS considered that the overall responsibility for the setting and achievement of strategic goals lay with the Department of the Taoiseach and even though FÁS provided the funds for the collection and indexing of data, its objective was the provision of training and not the setting of specific targets for completion of the database.

Bord Fáilte and SFADCO, though both supported the development of genealogy as a contributor to inward tourism, played no active role in the management and planning of the project nor had either agency made any long term commitments to the future funding of the project. From the project's inception in 1989, the Task Force, under the overall chairmanship of a representative from the Taoiseach's Office, envisaged a CEO being appointed who would report to the IGP co-ordinating committee. The field management of the project was, in turn, undertaken by project officers reporting to the CEO. Three project officers were appointed between 1989 and 1991 to manage the project in the state

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<sup>24</sup> See Comptroller and Auditor General, *Report on Value for Money Examination, Department of the Taoiseach: The Irish Genealogical Project* (The Stationery Office, Dublin, 1996).

and a fourth appointed to work in Northern Ireland. However, because of a lack of funding, the CEO was not appointed until July 1996, leaving the project without overall direction and without any clear targets established for the progression and completion of the index. The funding and reporting arrangements arising from the operation of the IGP and the non-appointment of a CEO undermined the roles of the project officers. There were delays in securing funding for their continued employment which caused them further frustration. By the time the CEO was appointed in 1997, two of the three project officers had left the IGP resulting in a loss of expertise and knowledge.<sup>25</sup> In 1997 responsibility for delivering the key objectives of the project was re-assigned to a limited company, Irish Genealogy Limited and overall supervision transferred from the Department of the Taoiseach to the Department of the Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht, and the Islands.

The company structure consisted of three full time employees; a Chief Executive Officer, an Information Technology Manager and a Project Administrator reporting to a Board of 15 directors appointed from representatives of the key stakeholders. The overall structure of IGL is shown in Figure 4.7 below. The establishment of IGL, following the 'value for money report', clearly intended to provide a more cohesive structure that could better deliver the IGP aims and objectives. However the composite structure of the Board was not substantially different from the previous arrangements and presented the newly appointed CEO with the task of building a common consensus from stakeholders with widely differing agendas.

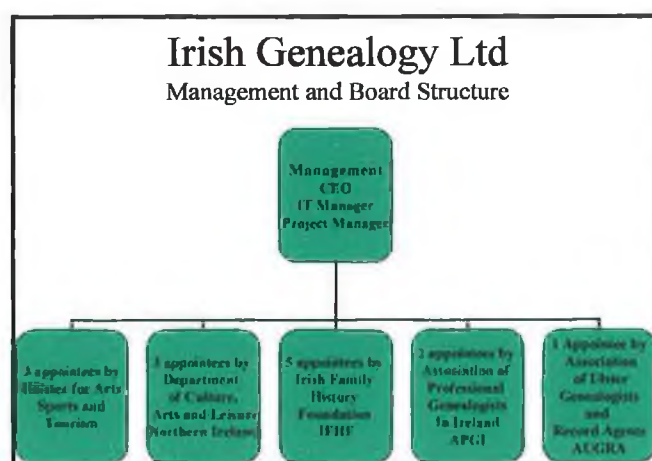


Figure 4.7 Board Structure of IGL

Source: Comptroller and Auditor General, *Report on Value for Money Examination, Department of the Taoiseach: The Irish Genealogical Project* (The Stationery Office, Dublin, 1996), p. 63.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

Moreover the serious shortfall in achieving the data collection targets became a matter for political intervention in a number of parliamentary debates over the subsequent years.<sup>26</sup> Of particular importance in this regard was the commissioning in 1996 of a review of genealogical resources within Ireland by the Heritage Council at the request of the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands. The report included an extensive public consultation process which included the main stakeholders in IGL.<sup>27</sup> The main recommendation in the report included the establishment of an Irish Family History Research Centre based in Dublin in a purpose built building. At the time the report was being submitted, capital costs for this project were estimated at IR£2.6 million with annual running costs of IR£386,000. During the preparation of the report a change of government had replaced the original Minister who had commissioned the report and the new incumbent did not pursue the matter further.

Whether or not such an institution would have provided a quality solution to genealogical research is debateable. However the report did underline the fundamental differences in the aims and objectives of the stakeholders, particularly the IFHF which sought to promote local research centres, encourage local sustainable tourism and develop 'downstream' added value business. Moreover the National Library had at the time the report was being prepared already established a dedicated consultancy service staffed by professional genealogists which was at the time dealing with *circa* 300 enquiries a week.<sup>28</sup>

### **Progress and Development of the Irish Genealogy Project, 2000-2006**

Following on from the establishment of Irish Genealogy Limited in 1997, state funding amounting to €2.5 million was provided over the period 1997 to December 2004. IGL provided technical support to the IFHF centres by way of IT support and replaced obsolete IT systems with modern server based systems on a common software platform. The two key objectives over this period were to complete the collation and indexing of church records by the IFHF centres and to transfer the data to a central computer data base so as to establish a Central Signposting Index. The aim of this index was to allow

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<sup>26</sup> See *Dáil Debates*, Vol. 479, 13 May 1997; Vol. 490, 7 May 1998; Vol. 590, 20 October 2004; Vol. 598, 17 February 2005; and Vol. 588, 1 July 2005.

<sup>27</sup> See The Heritage Council, *Towards Policies for Ireland's Heritage. The Provision of Genealogical Services in Ireland* (The Heritage Council 2000).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

Internet access on a county-by-county basis and to direct genealogy researchers to the appropriate county based centres where more detailed and extensive research could be undertaken. The IGL target was to have 10 million records on the index by 2007. The achievement of these objectives was entirely dependant on the major stakeholders having mutually agreed aims and objectives. However, long standing differences between IGL and the IFHF which had existed almost from the start of the project in 1989 came to a head in January 2005, when the IFHF members resigned from the board of IGL and instructed their affiliated centres to cease providing any further data. At the root of the problem, as indicated earlier, was the fact that the centres were semi-autonomous, mostly private limited companies, with very strong local community-based agendas. Although 19 of the centres had completed the inputting of church records, the rate of progress to complete the task was, in 2005, running at the rate of 1% per annum. Moreover IFHF were unhappy with the IGL focus on completion of the index before all the data had been put into the databases. They believed that the completion of the genealogy centre data bases should be the main priority of IGL. In a letter sent to IGL by IFHF in May 2005, they commented:

The index appears to be a big database due to the inclusion of records other than those on births, marriages and deaths and remains in a partially completed state and was unlikely ever to be completed.<sup>29</sup>

An indication of the likely future of the project in general, and IGL in particular, was expressed by the Secretary General, Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism during an examination of the project by the Dáil Committee of Public Accounts:

The Minister called on both parties to resolve their difficulties. Unfortunately, efforts made to reach agreement in the bilateral meetings between IGL and IFHF in July, September and November 2005 failed to break the impasse...IGL's capacity to shape the future direction of the project has been further reduced by the resignation earlier this year of its Chief Executive to take up a post elsewhere in the public sector. We are now at a crossroads for the project. Existing structures are not working and there seems little prospect of achieving a reconciliation between the parties soon. There are some fundamental questions that need to be addressed regarding its continuation.<sup>30</sup>

However, the increasing use of genealogy web sites has effectively made redundant the use of geographically located archives and thus impacted significantly on the number of visitors coming to Ireland to search out their ancestors. The launch in 1998 of ancestry.com was a significant development, and was followed in 1999 by the opening up of access to Irish parish records held by the Church of Latter-Day Saints. The number of

<sup>29</sup> *Dáil Committee of Public Accounts*, 25 May 2006.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*



genealogy websites now runs into the thousands. The word 'genealogy' is believed to be the third most popular search word on the Internet. In addition, the amateur researchers increasingly post their results on their own web sites which in turn can be accessed by other researchers.

Figure 4.8 below illustrates the significant fall in genealogy tourism since 1999. The drop off rate is such that the ITB have not collected data since 2004.

<b>Genealogy Tourism Visitors, 1999-2004</b>						
<b>All Figures in Thousands</b>						
Overseas Visitors,	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Britain	32	26	20	11	11	9
Europe	2	2	1	1	2	0
USA/Canada	61	74	49	20	37	26
Australia/New Zealand	11	14	18	4	3	10
Total	106	116	88	35	63	45

**Figure 4.8 Genealogy Tourism Visitors, 1999-2004: Source: Bord Fáilte.**

Whilst the numbers, even at their peak in 2000, are relatively small compared to the estimated 6 million visitors who visit annually, they are significant in that many of the county-based genealogy centres are sited in small rural communities away from the honey pot destinations such as Dublin, Galway or Killarney. Their relative isolation means that small though the numbers maybe they represent an important contribution to these rural economies generating income not just at the centres but downstream into gift shops, hotels, B&Bs, restaurants and retail outlets.

### **Conclusion**

The attempt by the State and private interests to develop genealogy research on the island of Ireland as a viable and sustainable tourism product appears, on the evidence presented above, to have substantially failed. What initially promised to be a growth sector in the Irish tourism product mix has now declined to the point that Fáilte Ireland no longer collects data on the number of visitors who come to Ireland in search of their family roots. The arrival of the Internet and the ability of researchers to access major online data bases without the need to leave their home country, or indeed their armchairs, has created a 'virtual' 'Genealogy Tourist' who brings no added value to the Irish economy and in particular no added value to County Mayo. This development, added to a fragmented and

fractionous relationship between the major stakeholders, has created the need for a critical review of the methods of promotion and encouragement of genealogical tourism.

Overall, tourism remains a major contributor to the Irish economy and year-on-year exhibits strong growth.

	2002	2003	2004	2005	Target. 2006
Overseas visitors numbers (millions)	5.9	6.2	6.4	6.7	7.0
Overseas visitors spend (€ millions)	3,088	3,22	3,235	3,458	3,835

**Figure 4.9 Irish Tourism performance since 2003: Source: Fáilte Ireland**

In figure 4.9 The visitor numbers indicate that Ireland is still perceived as a quality destination despite the growing competition from emerging new destinations, particularly in the accession states of Eastern Europe which in 2007 offered comparable cultural experiences at highly competitive prices. A recent survey of price competitiveness for tourist-related products and services within the EU revealed that Ireland ranked only 16<sup>th</sup> against its European partners.<sup>31</sup> The challenge to Mayo and Ireland's genealogy tourism industry, therefore, is to fully embrace the new research technologies, identify and make contact with 'virtual' researchers, and examine new initiatives to encourage researchers to visit Ireland and the places and spaces inhabited by their ancestors as a natural extension of their research activities.

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<sup>31</sup> *The Irish Times*, 2 March 2007.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

# **The Provision of Genealogy Services in County Mayo: A Baseline Audit**

## **Introduction**

This chapter summarises the results of a baseline audit of the provision of genealogy services in County Mayo and the part that genealogy tourism plays in the more comprehensive field of heritage and cultural tourism in the county. Opinions were sought, from in so far as was possible, the key stakeholders within the county, including local and national bodies involved directly in the provision of genealogy services, local regional and national tourism bodies, and regional officials within the public services. In addition, comprehensive field interviews were conducted with 'Genealogy Tourists' and potential 'Genealogy Tourists', the aim of which was to compile a series of profiles which could assist decision makers in placing genealogy tourism as a viable and sustainable product within the wider portfolio of Mayo's heritage and tourism industry, and enable them to construct appropriate marketing models.

The impact of the use of the Internet in conducting genealogy research and the consequential potential for 'virtual' tourism to adversely affect 'real' 'Genealogy Tourist' numbers is also considered. An electronic questionnaire was placed as a link on the websites of several major genealogy societies and publications. The electronic questionnaire was designed to measure the extent to which this form of research might ultimately be used to encourage online genealogy researchers to follow through on their online findings by actually visiting the information sources in Mayo, many of which are not available on the Internet.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of County Mayo's geographical, demographic and economic position and continues with an inventory of its cultural and historical heritage which emanates from at least 5000 years of continuous occupation. The county contains an acclaimed world class built heritage of amongst others, tombs, prehistoric settlements, early Christian sites, a wealth of Medieval abbeys, monasteries and castles, and from the Great Famine period, the sad remains of abandoned villages and farms. These latter sites have a particular resonance for visitors who have traced their descent from the people who had once lived in them. The inventory also includes Mayo's natural heritage of stunning coastlines, mountains and bog, and the efforts being made to preserve and protect these priceless assets whilst presenting them in a 21<sup>st</sup> century tourist friendly manner via a network of museums, visitor centres, heritage farms and interpretive centres. The main body of the chapter summarises the results of the field

research carried out with visitors, including feedback from the service and information providers.

### Economic overview

County Mayo is situated on the West coast of Ireland. It stretches from Lough Corrib and the long fjord of Killary Harbour in the south, to Kilalla Bay and Erris in the north, and from Achill Island, Clew Bay and the Mullet peninsula in the west, to the adjoining counties of Sligo and Roscommon to the east (Figure 5.1). With an area of 558,831 hectares, it is the third largest county in Ireland representing 7.9% of the land mass,<sup>1</sup> although with a population of only 117,446, it is one of the least populated of the Irish counties having only 21 persons per square kilometre.<sup>2</sup>



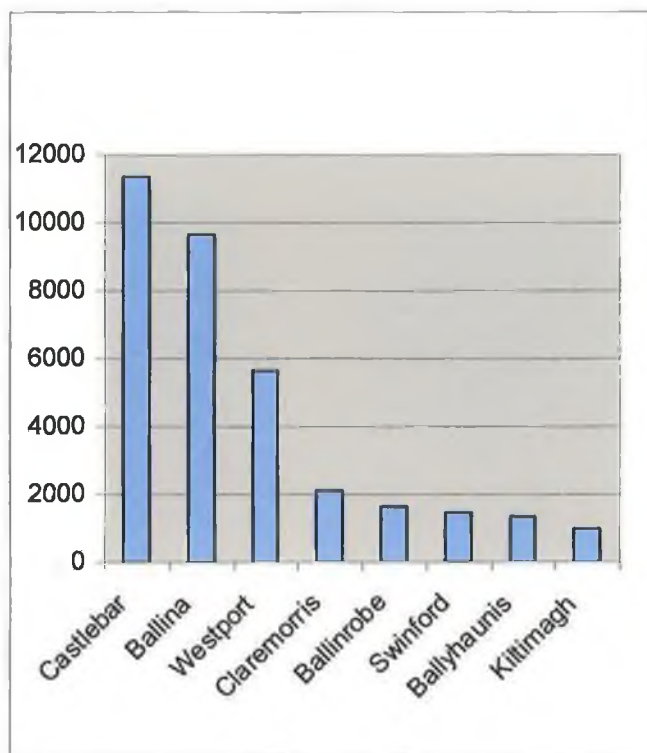
Figure 5.1 Map of County Mayo

Although it is the third largest county in Ireland by land area, large tracts of it are sparsely populated particularly in North Mayo. In the 2002 Census the total population living in eight of its principal towns with over 1,000 residents, amounted to 34,300 or just under one third of the population of the county reflecting its largely rural nature (Figure 5.2). However the rural economy is in itself very small with farming, fishing and forestry employing a mere 5,089 persons. Industry of all types employs a further 12,564 whilst the

<sup>1</sup> [www.wdc.ie](http://www.wdc.ie) (accessed on 3 April 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Central Statistics Office, *Census of Ireland, 2002* (The Stationary Office, Dublin, 2002).

services sector which includes hospitality and tourism represents by far the largest employer with 27,111.<sup>3</sup>



**Figure 5.2 Key Centres in County Mayo with Populations over 1000. Source: Western Development Commission. County Profiles: Mayo**

In 2003 the total number of overseas tourists visiting the county was estimated at 290,000 generating gross revenues of €100m emphasising the importance of maintaining and developing sustainable tourism activities within the county.

### **A Brief History of Mayo**

Mayo has a rich archaeological heritage, representing all periods from about 5,000 years ago (if not earlier) to recent times, and archaeological monuments can be seen all around the county. It was clearly a major settlement area in the Neolithic period (4000-2500 BC) as is evidenced by some 160 surviving monuments from that period representing more than 10% of the total of similar monument types found throughout Ireland. Of particular significance is the 1500 hectare Neolithic settlement site in the Behy/Glenultra region, west of Ballycastle, known as the Céide Fields. This site, which for 5000 years has been covered by blanket bog, represents a complex network of field systems and stone walls and is the most extensive Neolithic site of its type in the world.

<sup>3</sup> [www.wdc.ie](http://www.wdc.ie) (accessed on 3 April 2006).

Little is known of the development of settlement in Mayo during the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age, and although there is much stimulating debate on the issue, it is thought that the first Celts arrived in Ireland during this period. It was only with the arrival of St. Patrick and the development of reading and writing, that a fragmentary picture of early Christian development in Mayo begins to emerge.

St. Patrick spent some time in Mayo and is associated with Croagh Patrick, on the summit of which he is said to have spent 40 days and nights. He is also associated with Aghagower, Ballintubber, Kilmoremoy (near Ballina), Foghill (West of Kilalla) and Ballycastle. Following brief incursions and raids by Vikings in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Normans conquered Mayo in 1235. But through a process of Gaelicisation resulting from inter-marriage with the local Gaelic aristocracy, the colonisers ultimately became 'more Irish than the Irish' themselves. This process of Gaelicisation is best exemplified in the adoption by various Norman families of new surnames based on Gaelic-style patronymics. Examples of Mayo surnames today with Norman origins include Barrett, Bourke, Costello, Culkin, Davitt, Fitzmaurice, Gibbons, Jennings, Joyce, McVilly, Nally, Padden, Staunton and Walsh.<sup>4</sup>

Following the Norman Conquest and notwithstanding the early Gaelicisation described above, Mayo, like the rest of Ireland, gradually came under English rule although not without frequent rebellions and uprisings. The county was finally subdued by the Cromwellian campaign (1641-1653), which resulted in many Mayo farmers being dispossessed of their lands as Cromwell inflicted what in modern terms would be called an act of ethnic cleansing on the indigenous Irish population. As a reward for services rendered, Cromwellian soldiers were granted lands east of the Shannon and dispossessed landowners were forced to move onto less productive lands west of the Shannon. They in turn dispossessed landowners in Connacht, thereby creating a landless underclass which was later to become so vulnerable to the effects of the Great Famine.

In 1798 the Irish rebelled against English rule and Mayo played a major role in that uprising. On 22 August 1798, General Humbert and about 1,100 French soldiers arrived at Kilcummin Strand in North Mayo to participate in an insurrection which up to then had been confined to the north and east of the country. Humbert led 700 of his men, and about the same number of untrained Irish recruits, to capture the town of Castlebar before finally being defeated at Ballinamuck, County Longford. Following their surrender, the

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<sup>4</sup> [www.mayohistory.com](http://www.mayohistory.com) (accessed on 3 April 2006).

insurgents and anyone suspected of helping the French were hunted down and executed. It is estimated that 400 to 600 lost their lives in this operation.

The early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw continuous waves of unrest arising from a dispossessed and disenfranchised rural society. Their impoverished condition, dependant on a mono crop and diet of potatoes, left them with no alternative food source when that crop failed in the mid-1840s. During the Great Famine 1843 to 1852, thousands died from starvation-related diseases and emigration commenced on a big scale. It is estimated that the population of Mayo fell by 30% over this period. There was a tendency for emigrants from Mayo to settle amongst Mayo emigrants already settled in the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the US cities of New York, Jersey City, Boston, Philadelphia and Chicago had received and were still receiving the bulk of Mayo emigrants.

Although the US and the UK (and North America in particular) represented the major destinations for Irish emigrants in general, descendants of Irish emigrants to Argentina hold County Mayo in an especially high regard. It is estimated that there are over 500,000 people of Irish descent now living in Argentina, many of them descendants of Irish settlers who were instrumental in establishing the Argentinean beef industry. One Mayo emigrant, however, stands out above all others. Admiral William Browne (1777-1857), from Foxford, County Mayo was the founder of the Argentinean Navy, and became a national hero in Argentina's fight for independence from Spain. Today, there are hundreds of streets and three towns named after him in Argentina. The National History Museum in Buenos Aires features a small exhibition on his life, while his final resting place is located in Recoleta Cemetery

A measure of Brown's reputation and a 'litmus' test of the connection to Ireland still felt by many thousands of Argentineans of Irish descent was apparent on 26 September 2006, when Irish Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, unveiled a new monument to Brown in the Forbe's Quay area of the Dublin Docklands, in a new street named Admiral Brown Street. Furthermore, on 3 March 2007, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Brown's death was commemorated and an invited delegation of over 200 people from Mayo (including civic dignitaries, military personnel and residents from Foxford) attended a ceremony in his honour in Buenos Aires. One Argentinean of Irish descent remarked at the ceremony:



It's great to be able to meet our blood cousins. Despite the fact that my family has been here for nearly one and a half centuries, I feel and think more like an Irish person than an Argentinean.<sup>5</sup>



**Figure 5.3** Grave of Admiral William Brown at Recoleta Cemetery, Buenos Aires, Argentina

**Photo:** Mark McCarthy

A return visit to Ireland by an Argentinean delegation took place in late June 2007, when the Argentinean navy's training vessel, the *Libertad* (the world's second largest tall ship), visited the ports of Galway and Dublin to commemorate Browne's death.



**Figure 5.4** The *Libertad* Visiting Galway Port on 16 June 2007

**Photo:** Mark McCarthy

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<sup>5</sup> *The Irish Times*, 5 March 2007.

A special ceremony was also held in Foxford, County Mayo. Besides Ireland and Argentina, Browne's memory has also been honoured in other countries. In the town of Colonia in Uruguay, for example, a monument to Brown is located outside the Municipal Museum, which is housed in a building that was presented to Brown in 1823.<sup>6</sup> Overall, this very recent example of a continuing association with Ireland from a significant base of the wider Diaspora outside of North America, represents a potential future source of genealogy tourism which to date has not been actively promoted.



**Figure 5.5 Admiral William Brown Monument Outside the Municipal Museum, Uruguay**

**Photo: Mark McCarthy**

During the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a national movement was initiated in County Mayo, which brought about one of the greatest social changes ever seen in Ireland. During 1879, Michael Davitt along with James Daly and others founded the Mayo Land League, which he later organised into a national body, and which resulted in tenant farmers becoming owner-occupiers of their land.<sup>7</sup>

The history of Mayo since 1922 mirrors the national experience. With a high birth rate and few opportunities for employment at home, numerous people from Mayo emigrated to the UK and particularly to the US and Australia, joining the great extended Irish family throughout the globe. Ireland's entry into the Common Market (now the European Union)

<sup>6</sup> Mark McCarthy, *pers. comm.*

<sup>7</sup> [www.mayohistory.com](http://www.mayohistory.com) (accessed on 4 April 2006).

marked a turning point in its fortunes, as a protectionist economy embraced the move to a free market economy. Initially the Common Agricultural Policy funds cushioned Mayo's rural economy, but the decline in agriculture in the late 1990s and early 21<sup>st</sup> century has highlighted the fact that industrial and commercial development have not happened in Mayo on the same scale as in its neighbouring County Galway, for example, or in the east of the country.

However, some improvements in the local infrastructure have occurred particularly the opening of Knock International Airport (Horan International Airport) in May 1986. This was driven by the imperative of creating an arrival point for visitors to the Marian shrine at Knock, as well as a gateway to the West of Ireland, and has been critical in helping to promote the tourist industry as a major employer and wealth creator in the county. It is estimated that 1.5m pilgrims visit Our Lady's Shrine at Knock annually.

Sudden and dramatic changes in tourism trends have created the need to re-examine the entire structure of the tourist industry in Ireland and the products upon which it has historically relied, so that it may sustain itself as the largest single indigenous employer in the state in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. These changes have major implications for the Mayo economy which, as demonstrated above, depends significantly on tourism revenues and the means by which they are generated.

### **The Development of Genealogical Services in County Mayo: Historical Overview, Current Activities and Future Development**

The North Mayo Family Research Centre and the South Mayo Family History Centre described in detail below have contributed to the growth of tourism in County Mayo by developing unique products and services specifically targeted at the descendants of the many thousands of emigrants who left Mayo during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Although both centres have enjoyed considerable success over the years, particularly during the latter half of the 1990s, the dramatic downturn in genealogy tourism in recent years coupled with the precariousness of ongoing state funding, has presented the centres with a number of new challenges and opportunities. This section reviews their origins and growth and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats which they are dealing with, so that they can move forward and continue to provide a valuable contribution to the county's cultural heritage. A company called Clew Bay Heritage Centre Limited also runs a genealogical research service for the Westport and Clew Bay areas of County Mayo.

Although the South Mayo Family History Centre and the North Mayo Family Research Centre are separate legal entities, in reality they have worked as a single unit for most of the development years between 1985-2007, in terms of organisation, strategy, pricing, planning and marketing. An illustration of this close working relationship is demonstrated by the formation of Mayo Genealogy Marketing Company Limited in 1998 as a vehicle to market genealogy services, products and tourism under the brand “The Mayo Family History Centres”. The presence of An Taoiseach at the launch of the new company and his address at the event marked the then ongoing interest in genealogy tourism by the State. In launching this company the Taoiseach said:

the establishment of the Mayo Genealogy Marketing Company is a welcome addition to the ongoing work of genealogy in Mayo...genealogy is a valuable resource which if developed and marketed effectively has all sorts of commercial possibilities for local enterprise and employment. As part of an all-Ireland network of family research centres, the Mayo Family History Centres have been at the forefront nationally with the development and promotion of Irish Genealogy services...this initiative would also give great encouragement for others to follow suit...the need to identify with one's roots is a powerful and instinctive force.<sup>8</sup>

Although it was dissolved in 2005, its formation was a significant step forward in the development of marketing genealogy services to include value-added products and in the encouragement of tourism,

### **Location and Structure**

The South Mayo Family History Centre is situated on Main Street, Ballinrobe, next door to the public library. The current premises consists of an entrance lobby and visitor reception on the ground floor and an office suite on the first floor. There are no facilities for visitors to access the records directly.

The Centre is operated by a company called South Mayo Research Foundation Limited, which is a company limited by guarantee and it does not have a share capital. The company was incorporated on 22 January 1993 with the registration number 198184. According to its 2005 Financial Statements, it has seven members who are the same as the initial subscribers to the Memorandum of Association. It has six directors with Mr. Gerard Delaney occupying the role of managing director. The liability of the members is limited to €1.27 (£1). Copies of the profit and loss account and balance sheet for the year ending 31 December 2005 are furnished in Appendix iv. The principal objective for which the Company was formed is stated in its Memorandum of Association:

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<sup>8</sup> <http://bbs.mayo-ireland.ie> (accessed on 4 April 2006).

To identify, collect and record historical (archaeological) and genealogical information for South Mayo for the purpose of establishing a South Mayo Heritage and Genealogical Centre which will act as a repository for all such information collected and from which genealogical services will be operated.

The Company's accounts show that although the centre made a small operating profit in the 2005 trading year it is entirely dependant on state and other grants and subsidies for its continued existence. All staff are supplied to the company from a variety of FÁS Employment Schemes and training initiatives. All wage and associated costs are absorbed by FÁS. The company is dependant on support from FÁS, Mayo County Council and South Mayo Development Company for its continuing survival.<sup>9</sup> This financial overview is highlighted at the beginning of this analysis since the future development plans of the centres are predicated on continued financial support from state and local authority funding for the remaining years of the decade at the very minimum.

The North Mayo Centre is operated by a company called Mayo North Heritage Centre Limited, which is a company limited by guarantee, and it does not have a share capital. The North Mayo Company was incorporated on 5 September 1990 with the registration number 163859. Again its members appear to be the seven initial subscribers to the Memorandum of Association. According to its 2005 Financial Statements, it has 12 directors, six of whom are also subscribers to the Memorandum of Association. The liability of the members is limited to €1.27 (£1). Copies of the profit and loss account and balance sheet for the year ending 31 December 2005 are attached in Appendix v. The principal object for which the Company was formed is stated in its Memorandum of Association:

To identify, collect and record historical, archaeological and genealogical information for the purpose of establishing a County Heritage and Genealogical Centre which will act as a repository for all such information collected. To utilise the County Heritage of Mayo North's historical and, archaeological and cultural heritage and to encourage a sense of responsibility for the care of Mayo North's heritage and environment.

The North Mayo company's accounts show that it made a loss in the year ended 30 June 2005.

The North Mayo Centre is situated in the grounds of Enniscoe House (Figure 5.6), a listed heritage house on the shores of Lough Conn. The house is owned by a founder member and director of the company. It is located some 5 kilometres from the town of Crossmolina on the road to Pontoon and Castlebar and 19 kms from Ballina. As is the

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<sup>9</sup> Company Auditor's Notes to the Accounts, dated 31 December 2004.



case with the South Mayo Centre, visitors cannot access the records directly. Enniscoe House also has a visitor centre which contains a museum and tea-rooms and access to the extensively restored Victorian Gardens and woodland walks adjoining Enniscoe House.

The 2005 Financial Statements of the North Mayo Company indicated that a company called Enniscoe Community Development Limited (ECDL), which has the same members and directors as the North Mayo Company, took over the main trading activities of the company in the course of the financial year ending 30 June 2005.<sup>10</sup> The 2005 accounts show that it was intended, subject to discussions with Pobal, that the company would recommence the family heritage, museum and training courses from 1 July 2007. The centre has, in common with South Mayo Centre, been entirely dependant on state and other grants and subsidies for its continued existence.

However, as stated above, the North Mayo Company has been in discussions with Pobal to change the source of funding to a more permanent and secure source for long term development. Pobal operates under the auspices of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and administers the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme under the *National Development Plan 2007-2013*.

Clew Bay is operated by a company called Clew Bay Heritage Centre Limited, a company incorporated on 15 June 1989 with registration number 146429. The principal activities are stated in the Financial Statements for the year end 31 March 2006 to be:

The provision and development of facilities for collecting historical, cultural and social information on the Clew Bay area and to the presentation of this information to the public.



**Figure 5.6 Enniscoe House (Copyright, Susan Kellett)**

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix v.

Clew Bay Heritage Centre made a small operating profit for the above financial year. The accounts also show the company has seven directors who are also the members of Clew Bay Heritage Centre Limited. All of the above centres developed, like many other centres throughout the country, during the rapid increase in overseas interest in genealogy research during the 1980s, driven mainly by the significant surge in general tourism from North America. During the course of an interview with the South Mayo Centre manager, he explained the following:

In 1985 we had a plan at that stage for people interested in genealogy to open a centre in Mayo and Galway. That was the original plan. But very quickly it emerged that there were other groups in Galway that were interested in establishing centres in Galway so we initially set out to stick to Mayo so we split Mayo between North and South. This all happened I suppose in 1985, fairly quickly actually, and we have been in action ever since. In the early days we were based in Claremorris in a former vocational school and then we moved to Ballinrobe in 1989. We had a scheme in the Agricultural Institute. Then we moved to the Town Hall in 1990 until 1995 when we renovated these premises and we have been here since. We located in Ballinrobe because we needed to recruit suitable FÁS trainees who meet the criteria and Ballinrobe was the ideal place for this.<sup>11</sup>

Some importance must be attached to the location criteria of the existing premises which was not market driven, having due regard to serving the needs of the 'Genealogy Tourist', but was determined by the FÁS employment and training scheme. The decision also underlines the involvement of FÁS in the research programme. As a stakeholder, its interest was exclusively to fund the employment of suitable candidates to be trained in basic computer literacy over an 11 month training period. At the end of this period it was expected that the candidates would then find suitable employment in the general labour market.

The application of information technology and the use of personal computers was still very much an emerging business development in the mid-1980s and it was reasonable, at that time, to assume that suitably trained personnel would have enhanced employment prospects even in the unemployment black spots of South and North Mayo.

The observations of the Area Manager of FÁS, based in Castlebar, underline the aims and objectives of funding the family history centres from the training authority's standpoint:

There are two centres in some counties and one in others and to fund the activities they became part of what was known as the Local Training Initiative (LTI). The purpose of the programme was that you brought training to the people who couldn't go to the training centres in Ballina and Galway. People in these

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with the Director/Centre Manager, South Mayo Family History Research Centre, dated 16 June 2006.

areas can have their training locally if there is a local community who will set up the scheme. FÁS pay the training allowance for the participants and the co-ordinator. If the scheme is large enough, twelve or more, FÁS pays an allowance for an assistant co-ordinator. The course is for eleven months and during that time they learn skills to enable them to get back into the workforce.

The breakdown of the time to study for these exams or tests or qualifications, and time to help benefit the community is 50/50. So if the centre has people putting material on their database then they also have to give them 50% of the time for typing skills, spreadsheets, etc. Then they do their ECDL [European Computer Driving Licence]. The centres are registered test centres and South Mayo FHC is also a fully registered Further Education and Training Centre.

Now without this help, paying the wages, it would be very difficult to set up and put money into it. People tried it years ago... When the scheme was set up they were ring-fenced for as long as they were needed. Whatever budget cutbacks took place the funding was protected. But at the moment that ring-fencing has been removed but funding still continues in the hope that some day these centres will become profitable. However, there is a view that as long as this funding is continued there is no incentive to be self sufficient.<sup>12</sup>

The last few lines of comment from FÁS summarise the significant threats to the centres' present status and emphasises the need to seek alternative and more stable funding arrangements. Importantly, the centres need to develop new products and marketing strategies so as to meet the challenges presented by the changes to tourism patterns and genealogy research driven by the emergence of Internet research.

The centres have now largely completed the task of data collection and electronic storage of the local records. This task, as described in Chapter Four, has been frustrated and delayed in many associated centres by significant underestimation of the size of the task and internal divisions amongst the main stakeholders. However, on the evidence presented during the course of field research into the progress made in Mayo, both the South Mayo and North Mayo centres appear to have been largely successful in completing the task. The position in this regards is summarised by the centre manager and director of the South Mayo Family History Centre, who is also a director of the IFHF.

Up until 1995 we were putting in church records mainly. Then in 1995 we started working on civil records. Church records were mainly complete by then, well 98%. There are some terribly recorded registers. They are a dog's dinner. We have abstracted what we can from them and if I have the time I would like to go over them again myself. Because I am sure there are some records which have not been interpreted yet. If we went back to them we maybe could put on another couple of hundred records, but for all intents and purposes they are 100% finished.<sup>13</sup>

The completion of the database of church and graveyard records on a local basis by the centres, coupled with the apparent terminal breakdown of negotiations with IGL

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with the Regional Manager, FÁS, Castlebar, dated 27 June 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with the Director/Centre Manager, South Mayo Family History Research Centre, dated 16 June 2006.



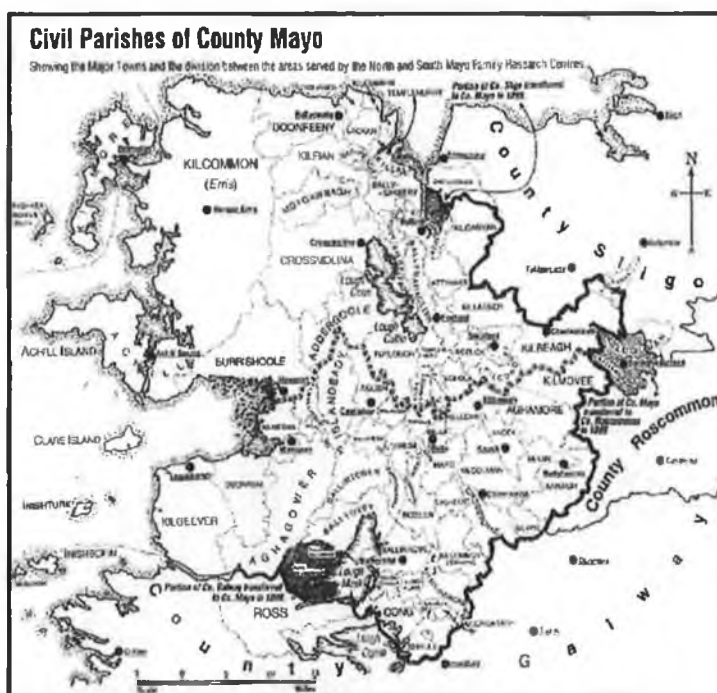
described in Chapter Four, has paved the way for the centres to move forward independently of the original national network scheme envisaged by the IGP.

### **Products and Services**

The centres offer a range of research services from a single search for one document to a full report. The databases held by the centres include a vast range of sundry sources which are unique to the county as well as major genealogical records relevant to people living in County Mayo during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These records include:

- Roman Catholic Church Records (pre-1900)
- Church of Ireland Records (pre-1900)
- Civil Records of Births, Marriages and Deaths (1864-1900)
- Griffith's Valuation Records (1855,1856)
- Tithe Applotment Lands Records (from 1824)
- Gravestone Inscriptions
- 1901 Census of Population

Both Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland parish records provide the best starting point for research, although the Church of Ireland records were formalised and formatted from their introduction, thus making them easier to read and more accurate than the Catholic registers, which were dependant entirely on the Parish Priest's own entry style. Moreover, in many Catholic parishes the entry was more of a bookkeeping exercise in that entries were often only made where payment had been made for the service. Civil registration of births, marriages and deaths began in 1864, and these records are an important source of genealogical information. Registration of non-Catholic marriages began in 1845. Griffith's Valuation, or to give it its more formal title, 'A primary Valuation of Tenements 1848-1864', was undertaken in order to establish the value of land and buildings in Ireland as a basis for levying a local system of fair taxation under the Irish Poor Law Act of 1838. Although it is a very valuable source for genealogical research, it is limited to the owners, lessors, and occupiers of land and buildings. This would have excluded landless cottiers who made up a sizable proportion of those who emigrated during this period.



**Figure 5.7 Civil Parishes of County Mayo**

**Source: Mayo Family History Centres**

Tithe Applotment books provide a record of the tithable land in each parish and were compiled in accordance with the Irish Tithe Composition Acts passed between 1823 and 1838. The tithe was a tax paid to the then Established Church of Ireland, calculated as one-tenth of the rateable value of one's agricultural produce. As with Griffith's Valuation it applied only to people who had over five acres of land and so excluded both landless people and smallholdings below five acres.

Gravestone inscriptions are, where they exist, very valuable records. However, the erection of gravestones was prohibitively expensive for many people, and until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was not part of the cultural tradition for much of rural Ireland. Members of the Church of Ireland, however, would have been more likely to have marked the grave of a relative by the erection of gravestones.

Although fragments of earlier census returns exist, the oldest complete censuses of the population of Ireland are for 1901 and 1911. The earlier records were either destroyed by government order during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, pulped for paper during the Great War of 1914-1918, or destroyed in the Four Courts fire during the Civil War in 1922.

Utilising the above and other local records, the centres levy a range of charges depending on the complexity of the research required. Prior to any search being undertaken, the applicant is required to complete a comprehensive application form which contains guidelines for completion. This application form can be downloaded from the

centres' websites. The lists of charges as at 2007 are set out in figure 5.8 below. The full report can be very extensive including details of an extended family group and delivered in a variety of high quality hard bindings.

Single Record Search	€30.
Research for a family group	€60.
Single record search – 1901 Census	€30.
Single record search – Griffith's Valuation	€30.
Single record search - Gravestone Inscription	€30.
Location search	€70.
Assessment of all research possibilities	€95.
Full hard bound report from:	€200

**Figure 5.8 Guideline Genealogical Research Fees**

**Source: Irish Family History Foundation**

### **The 'Genealogy Tourist' in County Mayo: A Profile Analysis.**

It is clear from the evidence outlined in Chapter Four, that the long term aim of IGL was to establish a central index as a point of entry for on-line research and then to direct subsequent enquiries to the IFHF centres such as those located in North and South Mayo described above. At no time has any proposal emerged from the documentation researched, to change the status of the centres from information gatherers to hands-on research centres. Moreover, it was not until mid-2000 that they had the equipment to enable user friendly access to the computerised data bank. The equipment provided under the original IGP scheme in 1990 was designed exclusively to allow input of raw data onto a computerised data bank. There was no analytical software within the programme to collate information to enable a search for individual results. This could only be done by extracting the information from the data banks 'off-screen' and collating it manually. Moreover there is some evidence to suggest that the choice of hardware and software may not have been put through a robust enough process for fitness of purpose. The South Mayo Family History Research Centre Manager commenting on the initial supply of equipment observed that:

In Charlie Haughey's day [1989] the Digital/DEC people in Galway was [*sic*] being fired money left, right and centre by the government to try and keep them from leaving, they were about to pull out. So they were awarded the contract, Digital and DEC which was a software company, to develop a computer programme and supply computers to computerise records. These things went all over the country. I think they spent about a million and a half pounds at the time on the project...the system worked, it still works, and I use it all the time. Although it was good for putting in records it was useless for research. You had to take everything off the screen and write it out again. In 2002 we decided to

transfer the stuff to PCs. In fact I did it myself and then IGL put money in. I think £40,000 for the software. All the data was transferred over to that system.<sup>14</sup>

Although there is very little direct evidence to prove it, this mismatch between demand and supply of a service (which was intended to generate incremental tourism volumes into the 21<sup>st</sup> century) undoubtedly contributed to the gradual decline in overseas visitors since 2000. In 1998 The Irish Ancestral Research Association, based in Boston, undertook a comprehensive survey of its members as part of its submission to The Heritage Council's policy plan for the provision of genealogical services in Ireland:

The last time I was in Ireland (29 days), I spent \$5,100 U.S. on travel, hotel, bed and breakfast, fees, car rental, research and books. The research centres and libraries are the reason I come...the centres are not open to the public for the most part...If I come again with my wife and children it will be because the research facilities have something more to offer.<sup>15</sup>

It was against this background that a field research audit was undertaken by the present writer in the summer of 2006 to construct a profile of visiting 'Genealogy Tourists' in County Mayo in comparison with 'General Tourist' profiles. The main objective of the audit was to determine what, if any, characteristics marked out the 'Genealogy Tourist' from the 'General Tourist' population, and what services need to be developed in order to effectively grow this niche market. The audit took the form of the distribution of a detailed hardcopy questionnaire,<sup>16</sup> seeking information relating to country of origin, socio-economic factors, psychographics, demographics, preferences and general observations on trip expectations, budgets and value for money. Where the respondent was identified as being in Mayo to partly or wholly undertake genealogical research, the second part of the questionnaire focussed specifically on those activities. The locations where samples were taken ranged from tourist offices to visitor attractions and family history centres. The total sample covered 96 respondents of which 45 identified themselves as 'General Tourists' and 51 as 'Genealogy Tourists'. As explained in Chapter Three, the weighting is entirely due to the sampling methodology used in which 'General Tourist' respondents were predominantly canvassed at tourist offices and visitor attractions and 'Genealogy Tourists' at the Family History Centres of North and South Mayo and at the independent Clew Bay Heritage Centre in Westport. In the cases of the North Mayo Centre and at Clew Bay, direct interviews were possible but there being no

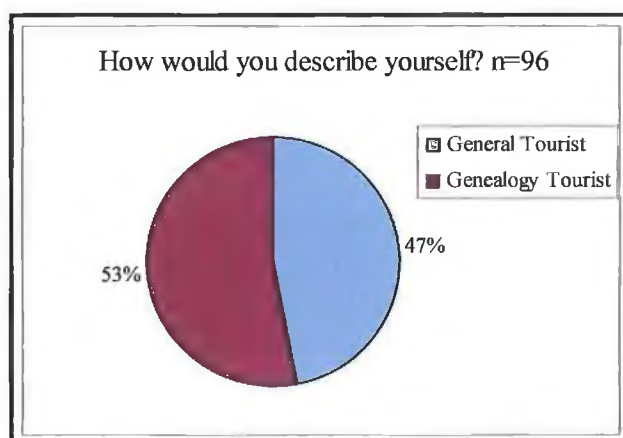
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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> TIARA, *Report on the Irish Heritage Centre Customer Satisfaction Survey* (TIARA, Auburndale, 1998), p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> See Appendix i.

adequate facilities in the South Mayo Centre, responses were collected by that centre from visitors at the reception area.

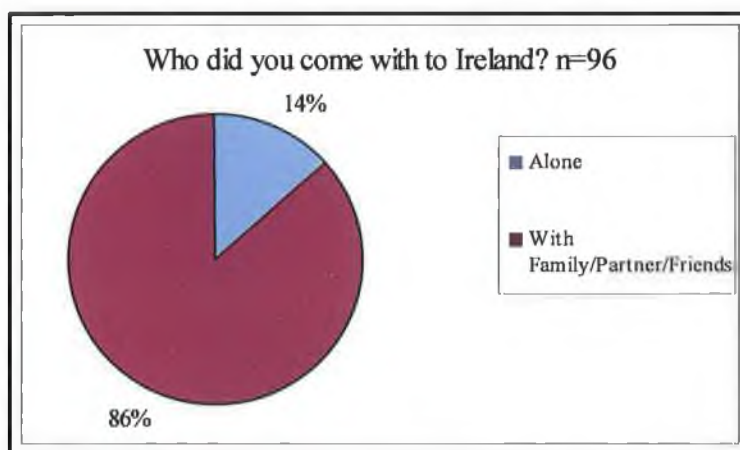


**Figure 5.9 Tourist Categories**

It would have been possible to collect significantly more 'General Tourist' responses than the sample size, particularly from the Westport Tourist Office, which is the busiest in the county. However, since the main objective of the survey was to construct typical models of a 'Genealogy Tourist' as compared with the 'General Tourist', the balance selected seemed appropriate. Since for all practical purposes the 'Genealogy Tourist' sample is 100% English-speaking, similarly English speaking 'General Tourists' were targeted in the tourist offices and visitor centres to maintain a balance between the two sets of data.

### **The 'Genealogy Tourist': A Comparative Analysis**

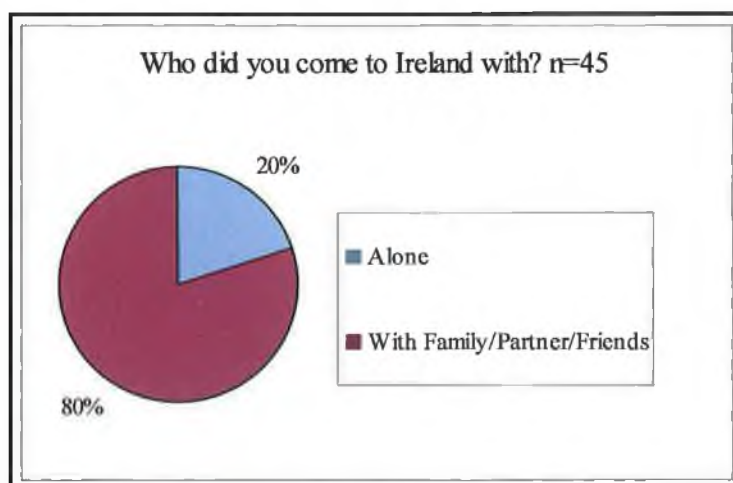
Part A of the Questionnaire sought to determine the key demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. This information was seen as being crucial in developing new marketing strategies particularly in targeting marketing specific sectors of the total market. When asked whether they came to Ireland alone or with family/partner or friends, 86% of all those interviewed were travelling with companions (Figure 5.10), although the data does not specifically narrow down exact relationships.



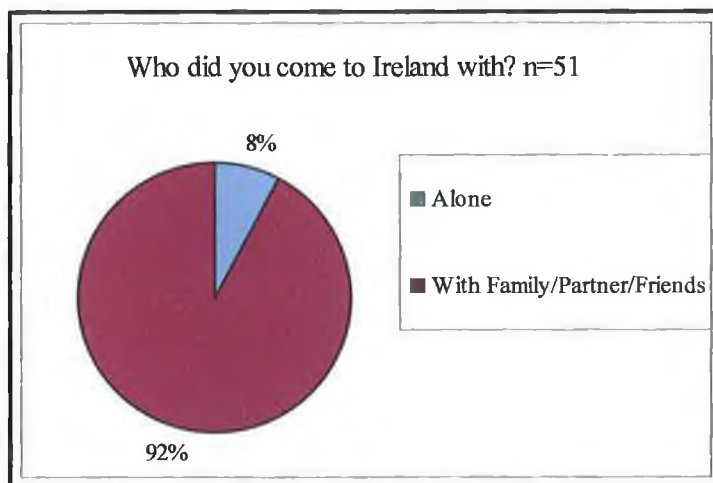
**Figure 5.10 Composition of Tourists: All respondents**

The profile illustrated in Figure 5.10 above changes when comparing the data between ‘Genealogy’ and ‘General Tourists’. Whereas the ‘General Tourist’ profile remains close to the overall sample (20%) travelling alone against (80%) with family or partners, (Figure 5.11), the ‘Genealogy Tourists’ are mostly represented by family groups (Figure 5.12). This very high percentage of ‘Genealogy Tourists’ travelling with family/partners reflects the ‘family’ participation associated with family history research.

In seeking to determine the country of origin the respondents were mostly English speakers and mostly either US or UK citizens. A further small number, classified as ‘others’ represented some Commonwealth countries and Irish citizens.



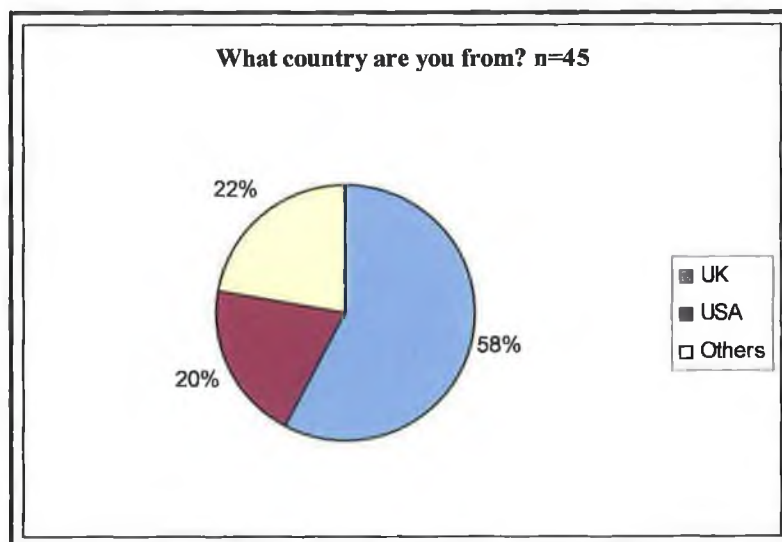
**Figure 5.11 Composition of Tourists: ‘General Tourists’**



**Figure 5.12 Composition of Tourists: 'Genealogy Tourists'**

The results indicated that the distribution of visitors by country corresponds very closely with that reported by Fáilte Ireland in its 2005 survey of overseas visitor's.<sup>17</sup> Figures reported by Fáilte Ireland are shown in brackets. Within the 'General Tourist' population (Figure 5.13), 58% (59%) were from the UK with a further 20% (25%) from the US. The remaining 22% (16%) were from all other countries.

The overall general tourist profile confirms that the UK remains the dominant market for overseas tourism while the US, which although in decline in recent years, remains a still important runner-up.

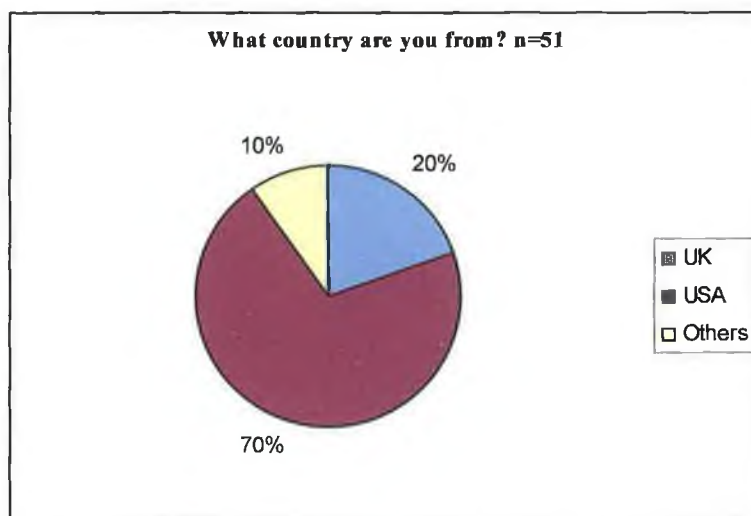


**Figure 5.13 General Tourist Profile: Country of Origin**

But when the general country profile is compared to the specific 'Genealogy Tourist' profile (Figure 5.14), the weighting changes dramatically as indicated by the following

<sup>17</sup> Tourism Ireland, *Facts and Figures 2005, Island of Ireland Overseas Visitors* (Tourism Ireland, Dublin, 2005).

figures, in which comparative data for general tourism is indicated in brackets: UK, 20% (59%), US 70% (20%), and Others, 10% (21%).



**Figure 5.14 'Genealogy Tourist' Profile: Country of Origin**

The reversal in the distribution of 'Genealogy Tourists' by country between the USA the UK and Others is of course not surprising given that historically the main destination of emigrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries was North America and Canada, and nearly 50% of the estimated 70 million strong Irish Diaspora are currently citizens of the US. Nonetheless the data serves as an emphatic pointer to the importance of genealogy tourism in promoting tourism in that market. The importance becomes even more relevant when comparing the relative value of the 'Genealogy Tourist' market to the general tourist population in Figure 5.15.

### **Economic Potential of 'Genealogy Tourists'**

The comparative values of the two market segments were calculated using the estimated average spend per visitor to the island of Ireland in 2005. The average spend was heavily related to the length of stay, with visitors from North America and other long haul markets tending to spend more per trip.

'General Tourist'	%	€	Total Value	'Genealogist Tourist'	%	€	Total Value
UK	58	343*	20237	UK	20	343*	6860
USA	20	783*	15660	USA	70	783*	54810
Other	22	652*	13692	Other	10	652*	6520
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>		<b>49589</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>		<b>68190</b>

**Figure 5.15 Comparative Value Analysis of Genealogy Tourism to General Tourism.**

Source: Facts and Figures 2005. Ireland of Ireland Overseas Visitors. Tourism Ireland.



Using the percentage distribution spread of general to 'Genealogy Tourists' derived from the data outlined in Figures 5.13 and 5.14 the total value of the 'General Tourist' market of respondents in this sample, €45,589, rises to €68,190 when converted to a 'Genealogy Tourist' market which is heavily dominated by the North American visitor. The importance of this value analysis is that since 2004 Bord Fáilte has not collected data on this market segment because of the dramatic falloff in numbers outlined in Chapter Four (see Figure 4.7). In judging the value of the market in numeric rather than economic worth, Fáilte Ireland would appear to have lost sight of the incremental revenue each additional genealogy visitor would bring to the market.

### Social Status and Age Profile

Closely linked to the comparative economic worth of the general and genealogical tourist profile is the social status of the two groups in terms of current occupation and age profile. Figures 5.16 and 5.17 illustrate the findings from the field research. Within the 'General Tourist' population, respondents were predominantly in full time employment (62%) compared with (27%) claiming retirement status. The relative status of the 'Genealogy Tourist' population retired (55%), compared to the 'General Tourist' population (37%), reflects the likely tendency of a 'Genealogy Tourist' to have increased leisure time when retired from full-time work.

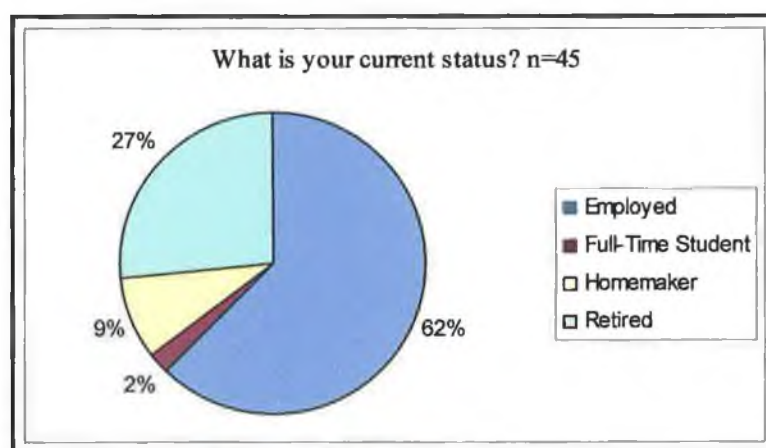


Figure 5.16 'General Tourist' Profile: Social Status

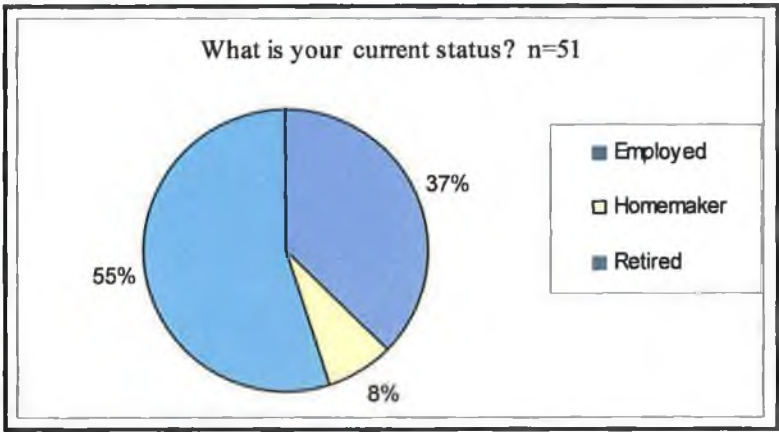


Figure 5.17 'Genealogy Tourist' Profile: Social Status

This profile is, not surprisingly, replicated in the response to age banding in Figures 5.18 and 5.19. Eighty percent of the respondents indicated that they were in the age banding of 54 years and over against 49% recorded in the general population.

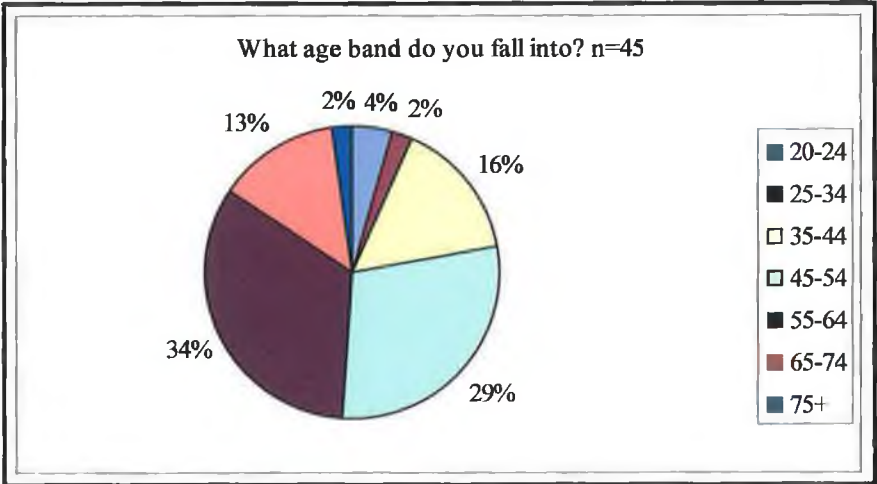


Figure 5.18 'General Tourist' Profile: Age Banding

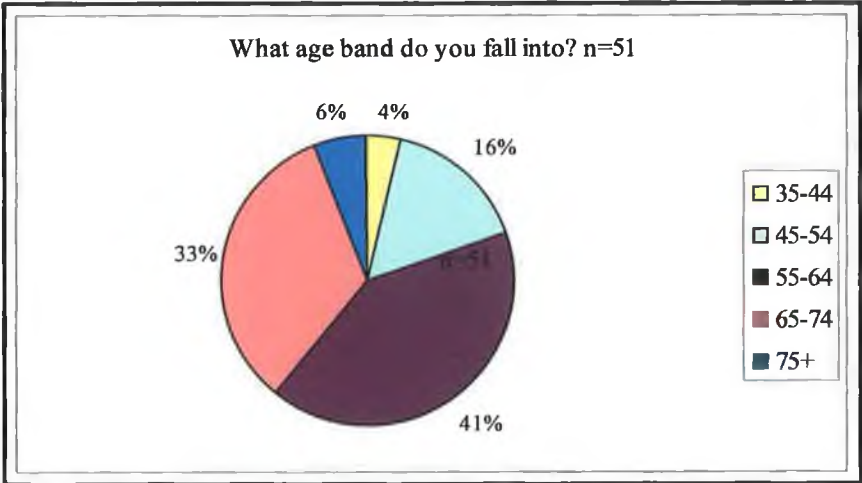


Figure 5.19 'Genealogy Tourist' Profile: Age Banding

These results compare closely with research undertaken by Tourism Ireland in attempting to establish future tourism trends within their 'Marketing Insights' programme. They recently reported:

By 2020 it is forecasted that the 55+ age group will be the strongest age led segment in the Western World...North America is expected to see the highest increases in the senior age group ...North American visitors already have the oldest profile amongst our source markets. The older traveller will be better educated than today, with more global thinking. They will be demanding with a desire for customisation, to do things in a tailored way, and given the time flexibility seniors will have, they will be more likely to avail of mid-week travel and non-standard trip lengths...All enterprises need to capture feedback from older customers and close the gap between the experience they currently offer and the needs of the older age group.<sup>18</sup>

This general overview combined with the statistical evidence outlined above suggests that the socio-economic and lifestyle preferences of the 'Genealogy Tourists' position them positively within the identified markets capable of being promoted outlined by Tourism Ireland.

### Travel and Accommodation

The visitor questionnaire sought to establish travel and accommodation patterns between the two groups as well as information about their holiday experiences and expectations. Figures 5.20 and 5.21 compare the two groups' previous travelling experiences to Ireland. The significant change from 64% of repeat visits within the 'General Tourist' population, to 92% of 'Genealogy Tourists', is a further pointer to the value of encouraging this tourism sector.

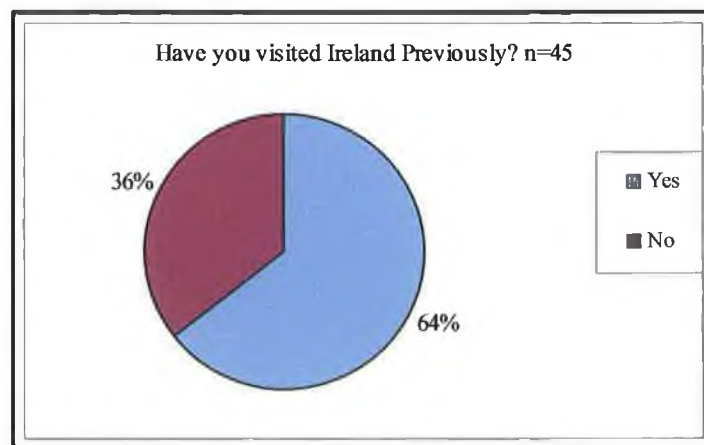
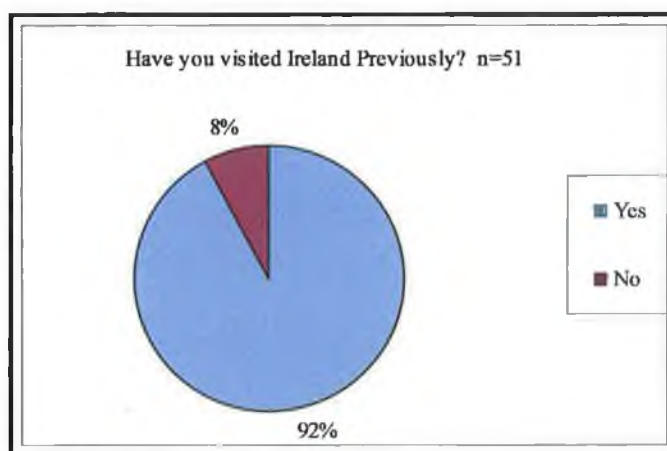


Figure 5.20 'General Tourist' Profile: Previous Holiday Experience in Ireland

<sup>18</sup> Tourism Ireland and Marketing Insights, *The Ageing Consumer* (Tourism Ireland, Dublin, 2004), p. 1.



**Figure 5.21 'Genealogy Tourist' Profile: Previous Holiday Experience in Ireland**

Multiple visits have the potential to encourage incremental tourism as family and friends and newcomers to genealogy research may come on subsequent trips. The preferred travel arrangements for both classifications are illustrated in Figures 5.22 and 5.23. Not surprisingly the majority of both groups arrived by air and then hired cars – 'General Tourists' (54%) and 'Genealogy Tourists' (68%). A sizable minority within the 'General Tourist' population (28%) arrived by car ferry reflecting the strong presence of UK residents within that grouping.

Few respondents chose to travel by rail or coach services. Clearly car hire offers a flexible choice of travel and although not directly tested by field research, the poor transport infrastructure from the airports (principally Dublin, Cork and Shannon) and seaports (principally Belfast, Dublin Port and Dun Laoghaire) to the West of Ireland and within County Mayo had a significant bearing on travel choices. Significant infrastructural improvements to both road and rail connections to the West of Ireland planned over the next few years under the auspices of the *National Development Plan* (and embodied in Fáilte Ireland West's submission to the Tourism Policy Review Group) may possibly influence this profile, but since the major cultural and heritage sites in County Mayo are not sited along or close to the major road and rail links, it is doubtful that these proposals will have a significant effect on the preferred travel arrangements illustrated in the survey.

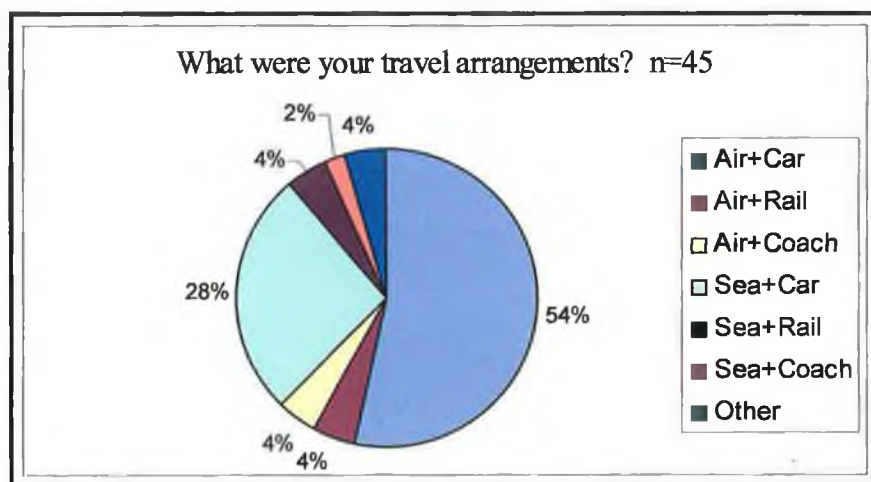


Figure 5.22 'General Tourists' Profile: Travel Arrangements

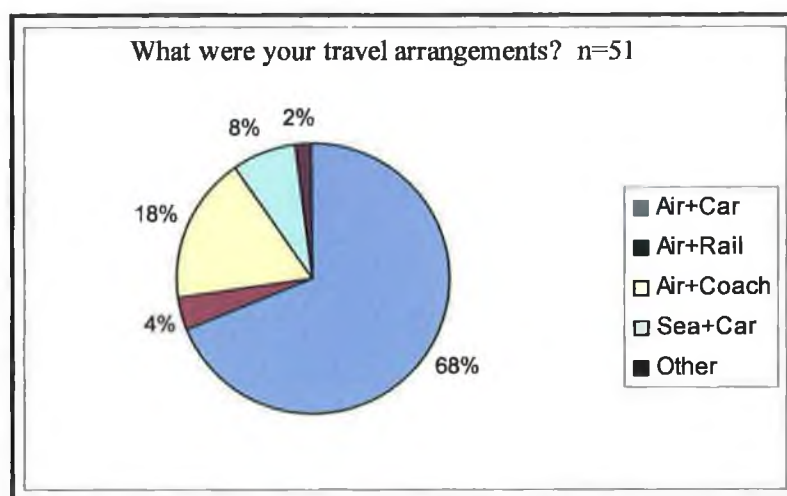


Figure 5.23 'Genealogy Tourists' Profile: Travel Arrangements

### Propensity to Spend

Although Tourism Ireland has identified a higher spend potential within the US and long haul incoming tourists, no apparent trend appears in the results obtained by the survey when comparing comparative spend (Figures 5.24 and 5.25). The results show that potential spend amongst the two groups is equally distributed. A possible reason for this result is that the survey was taken in high summer when it might be reasonable to expect that a greater number of the general population were taking longer rather than short break holidays. This assumption is partially supported by the findings shown in Figures 5.26 and 5.27, where tourists spending between one and two weeks within each group were evenly spread between the two groups – 'General Tourists' (54%) and 'Genealogy Tourists' (58%).

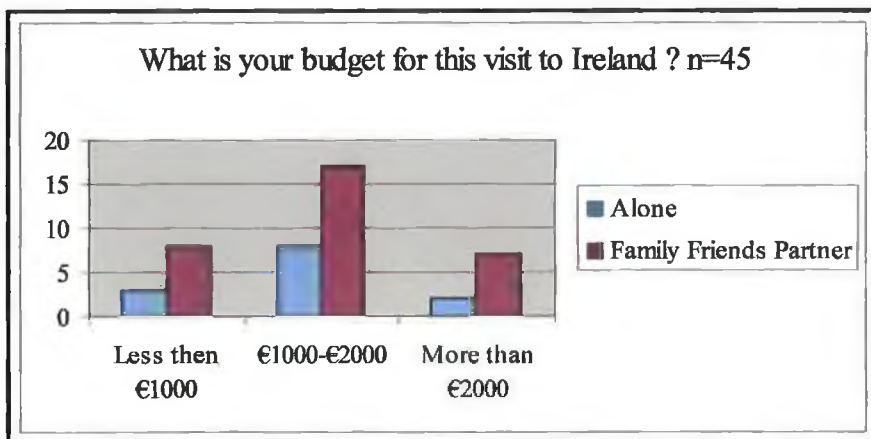


Figure 5.24 'General Tourists': Propensity to Spend

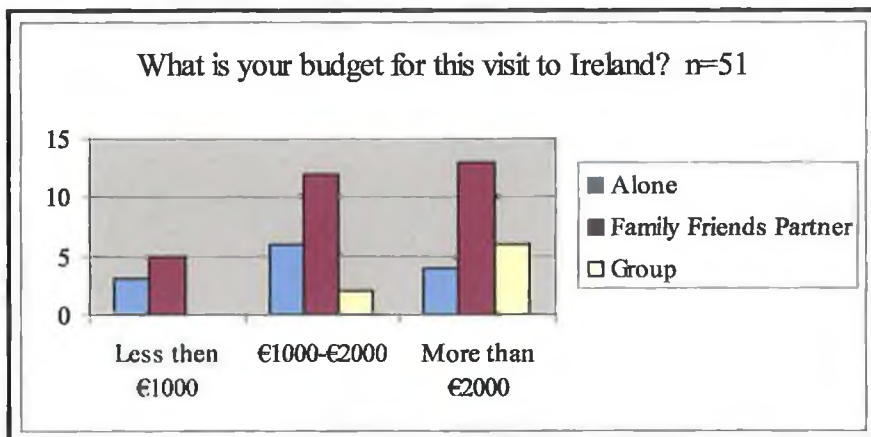


Figure 5.25 'Genealogy Tourists': Propensity to Spend

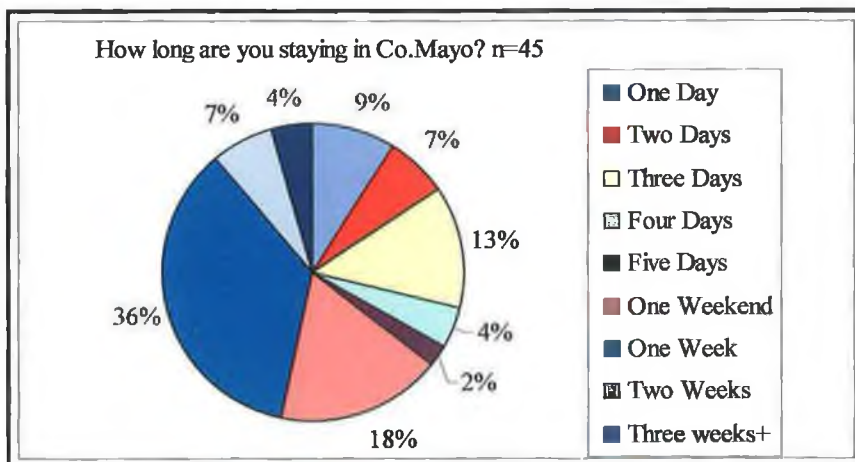


Figure 5.26 'General Tourists': Duration of Stay



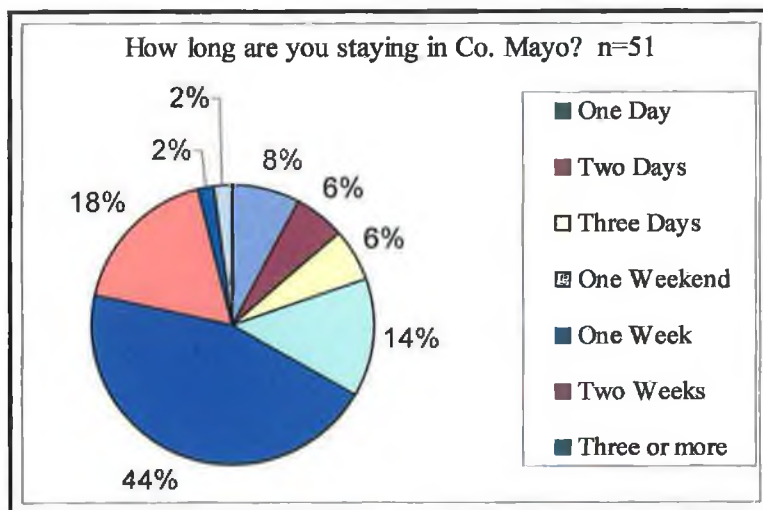


Figure 5.27 'Genealogy Tourists': Duration of Stay

**Value for Money.**

All respondents were asked to rate a number of basic services on a 'value for money' basis (Figures 5.28 and 5.29).

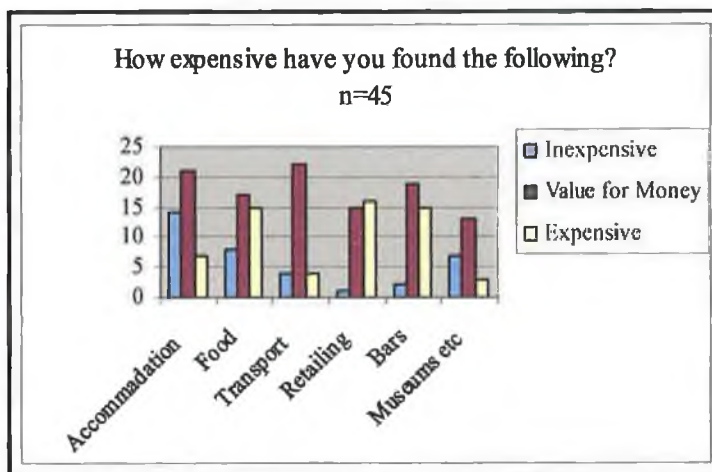


Figure 5.28 'General Tourists': Value for Money Analysis

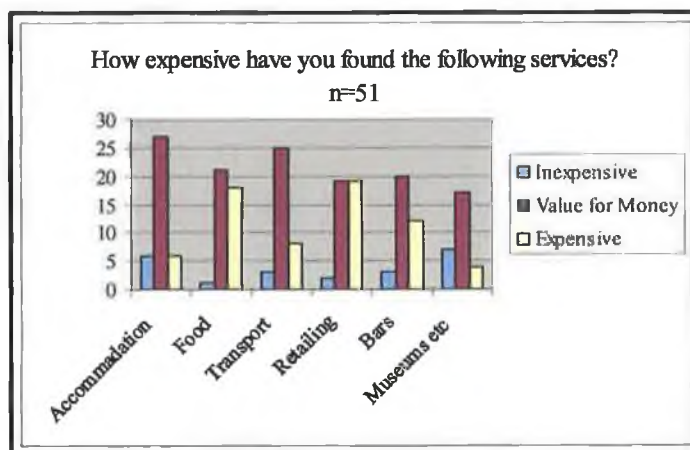


Figure 5.29 'Genealogy Tourists': Value for Money Analysis

The results were remarkably consistent between both groups, with the distribution of ratings ranging from inexpensive to expensive following very similar patterns. An exception was that a higher number of general tourists found accommodation less expensive. A possible reason for this single variation is that 54% percent of 'General Tourists' stayed in B&Bs and 17% stayed in hostels and self catering accommodation (Figure 5.30). The same proportion of 'Genealogy Tourists' (54%), chose to stay in hotels (Figure 5.31).

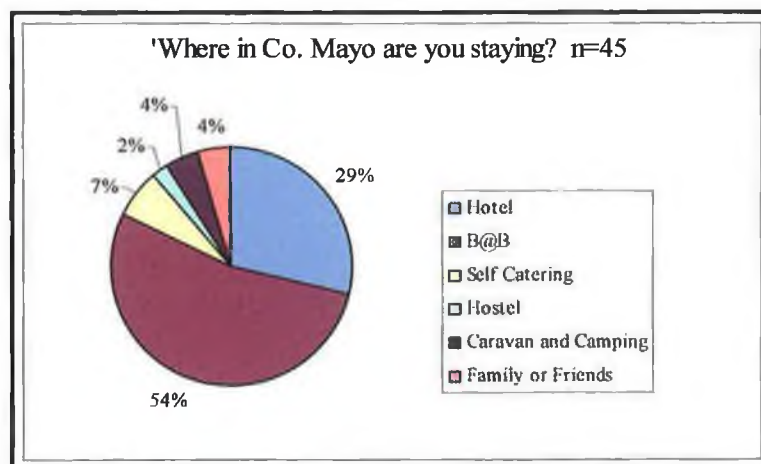


Figure 5.30 'General Tourists': Accommodation Preferences

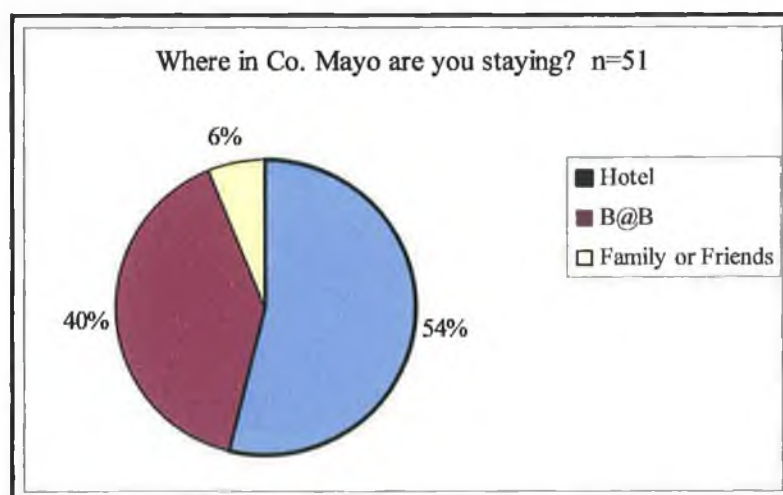


Figure 5.31 'Genealogy Tourists': Accommodation Preferences

Another important influencing factor affecting the two main national groups was that at the time of the survey (June-August 2006), whilst the Sterling–Euro conversion rate continued to favour the British Pound, the \$US rate had weakened against the Euro.



These variations created different perceptions of costs when compared to the cost of living in the tourists' home countries.

### Comparative Analysis of General Trip Expectations

Respondents were asked to comment on a selection of the key factors which are believed to attract visitors to the island of Ireland. All respondents were asked about their satisfaction rate on the following categories – scenery, hospitality, social life, pricing, and general activities (Figures 5.32 and 5.33).

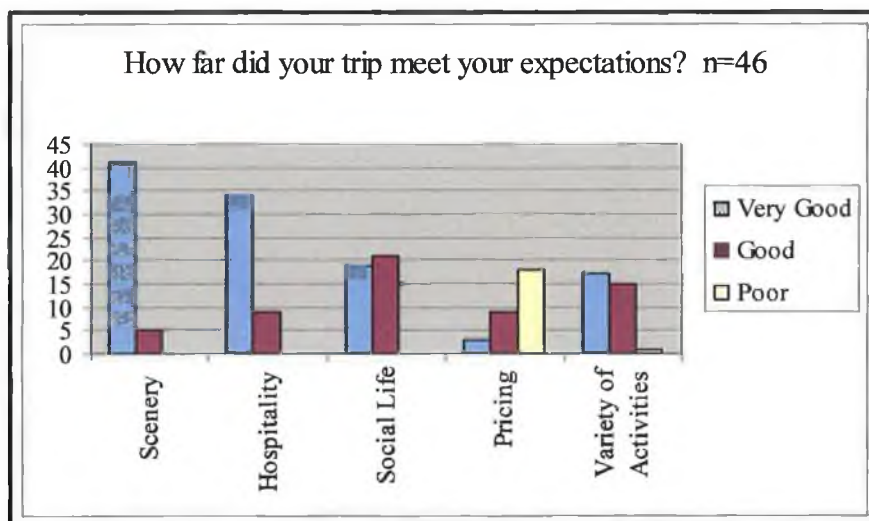


Figure 5.32 'General Tourists': Satisfaction Ratings on Key Aspects of Vacation

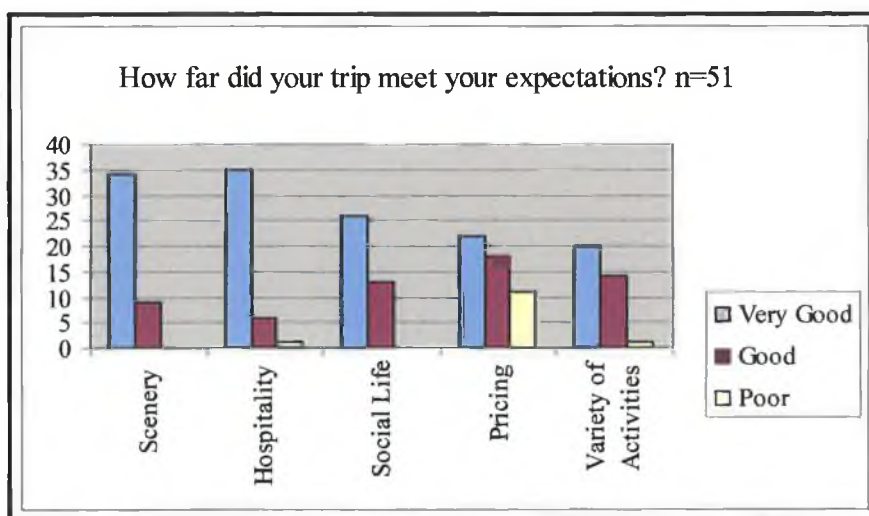


Figure 5.33 'Genealogy Tourists': Satisfaction Ratings on Key Aspects of Vacation

In its latest survey Tourism Ireland identifies the following categories – unique history, breathtaking scenery, rural-open spaces, music and pubs, and a healthy and relaxing environment – as amongst the key core attractions to be found in Ireland upon which American and UK visitors predominantly base their expectations. With the exception of

pricing, both groups expressed very high levels of satisfaction with these key experiences. The results, albeit from a relatively small sample, seem to validate the generally held belief that County Mayo presents to its visitors a comprehensive package of 'plus factors' in attracting tourism.

### **Culture and Heritage**

In its literal meaning, heritage means 'something that is inherited'. However, increasingly the term is used to describe 'virtually anything by which some kind of link, however tenuous or false, may be forged with the past'. When defined as that part of the past which is selected in the present for a variety of contemporary purposes, heritage can have 'an often bewildering array of identifications and potential conflicts'. In tourism the term has come to mean not only landscapes, natural history, buildings, artefacts, cultural traditions and the like, which are either literally or metaphorically passed on from one generation to the other, but those among these things which can be portrayed for promotion as tourism products'.<sup>19</sup> In Ireland, the Heritage Act of 1995 defines the national heritage as including monuments, archaeological objects, and heritage objects, such as genealogical records, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens, parks and inland waterways.

The hardcopy questionnaire sought to establish respondents' views and attitudes to the importance of Irish culture and heritage as a core ingredient in their trip expectations (Figures 5.34, 5.35, 5.36, and 5.37). Both groups believed that the two elements were important to them with the 'Genealogy Tourist' group unsurprisingly ranking both as very important, particularly heritage (53%, as against 33% of the 'General Tourist' group).

The importance of culture and heritage within Ireland's overall tourism product mix and just as importantly its proper management cannot be overestimated. In a survey of major activities and pastimes Tourism Ireland reported in 2005 that:

The image of the island of Ireland is a collection of ideas that resides in the hearts and minds of our holidaymakers...the core elements of Ireland's image are...warm and friendly people...living culture. The living culture reflects the character of the people. The culture is rich in music, celebrations. The historic culture of Ireland represents the deep-rooted history of the island captured in the castles, monuments and museums with which the visitor can engage and feel connected...The place is viewed as a rich tapestry of breathtaking landscapes

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<sup>19</sup> Cited in R. McManus, "Identity Crisis?: Heritage Construction, Tourism and Place Marketing in Ireland", in M. McCarthy (ed.), *Ireland's Heritages: Critical Perspectives on Memory and Identity* (Ashgate Publishing Ltd., Aldershot, 2005), pp. 235-36.

and seascapes. The unspoilt authentic scenery is steeped in history creating a varied experience for the holiday maker.<sup>20</sup>

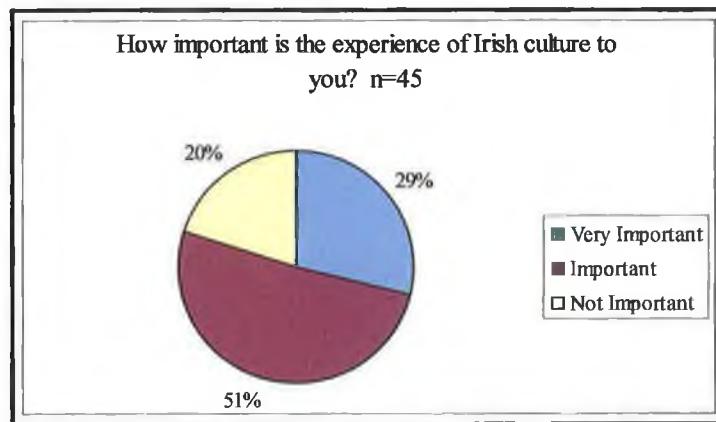


Figure 5.34 'General Tourists': Rank of Irish Culture as Part of the Holiday Experience

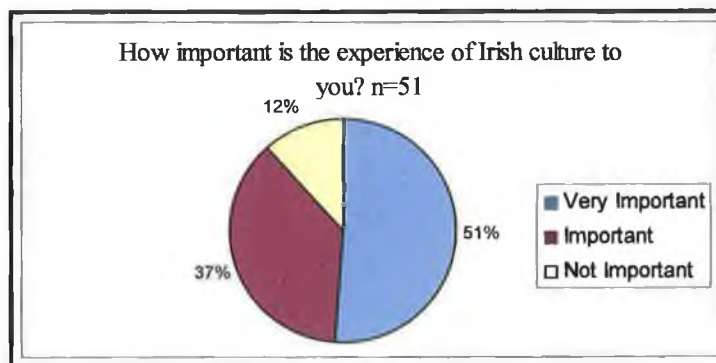


Figure 5.35 'Genealogy Tourists': Rank of Irish Culture as Part of the Holiday Experience

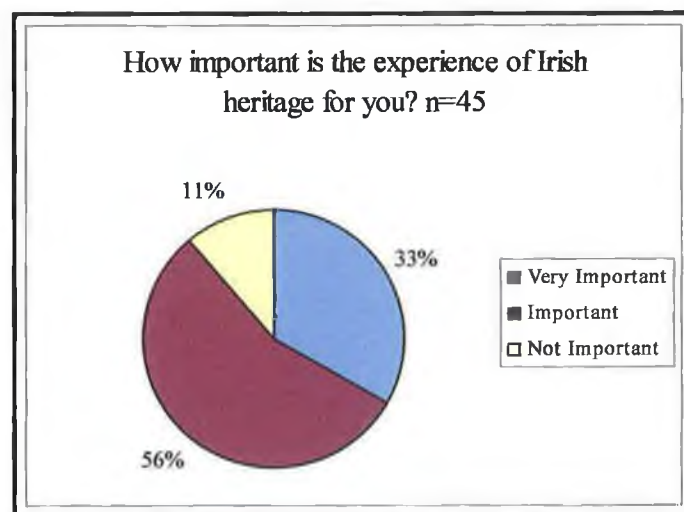


Figure 5.36 'General Tourists': Ranking of Irish Heritage as Part of the Holiday Experience

<sup>20</sup> Tourism Ireland, *Image of the Ireland of Ireland* (Tourism Ireland, Dublin, 2005), p. 1.

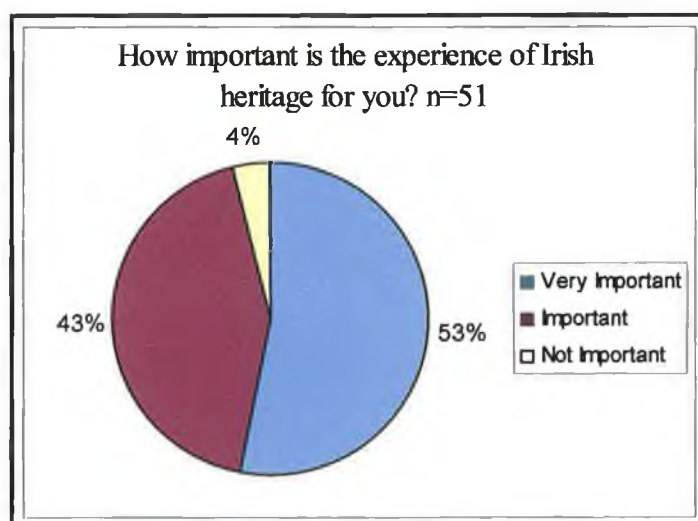


Figure 5.37 'Genealogy Tourists': Ranking of Irish Heritage as Part of the Holiday Experience

### The 'Genealogy Tourist' Experience

In order to assess the experiences of tourists who had visited Ireland specifically or partially to research their family history, opinions and observations were recorded both by paper audit undertaken during the summer of 2006 in County Mayo, and from two focus groups provided by members of TIARA, who visited Ireland in March 2006 and May 2007. TIARA has been very active over the past 10-15 years in providing constructive comment and objective criticism on the development of the Irish Genealogy Project and the research facilities available to its members via the various public and private genealogical depositaries throughout the island of Ireland

### Consolidated Responses from 'Genealogy Tourists', Summer 2006

Fifty-one responses were completed over the period of which 49 (96%) represented overseas 'Genealogy Tourists' (Figure 5.38).

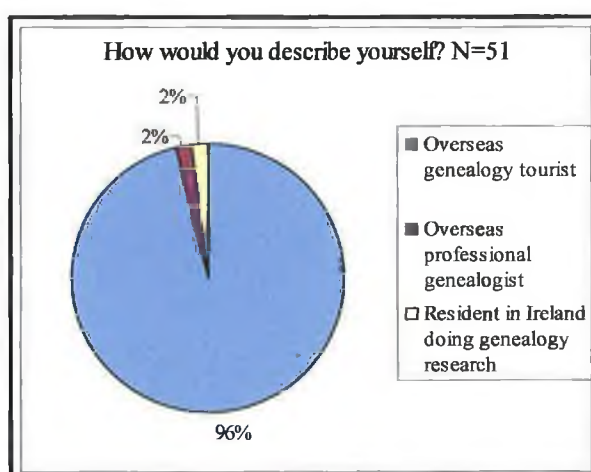


Figure 5.38 Representative Sample of 'Genealogy Tourists'

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with their research. One of the problems with this question is that the experience of ‘Genealogy Tourists’ may vary considerably from ‘first time’ visitors with little formal knowledge of where to start the research and what to look for, to experienced researchers making a second or sometimes third trip. Most respondents however indicated that they were generally satisfied (53%) or partially satisfied (41%) with their findings (Figure 5.39).

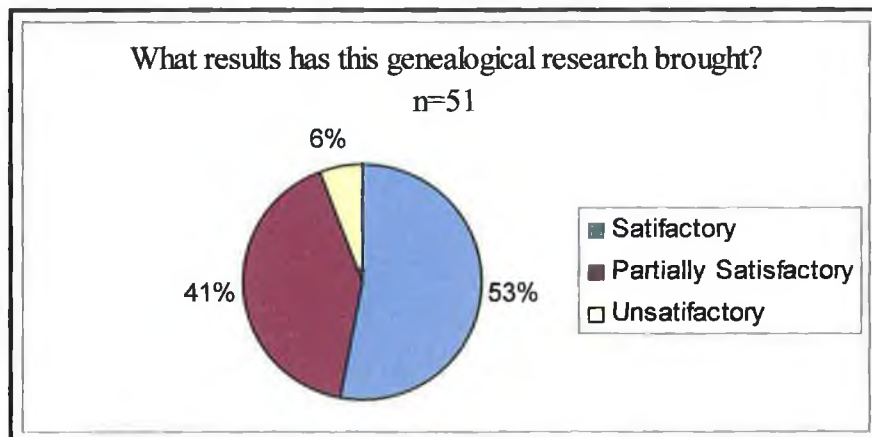


Figure 5.39 ‘Genealogy Tourists’: General Satisfaction Rating of Research Findings

All respondents indicated that they had accessed a selection of the primary archival material available either in the Dublin-based National Archives, local libraries or family history centres (Figures 5.40 and 5.41).

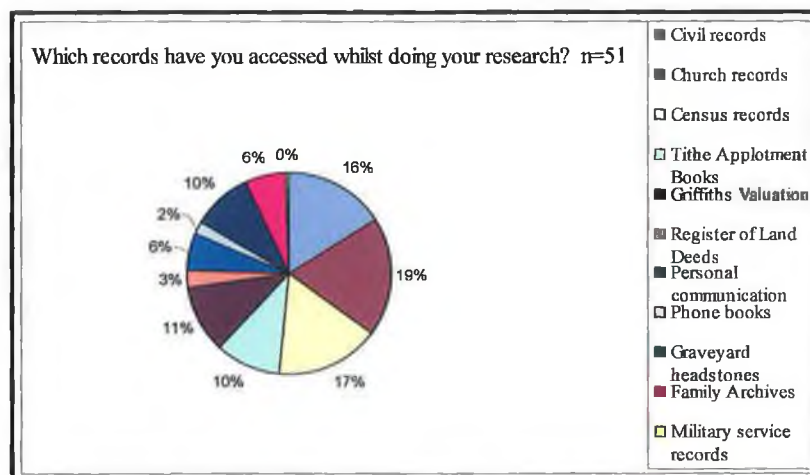
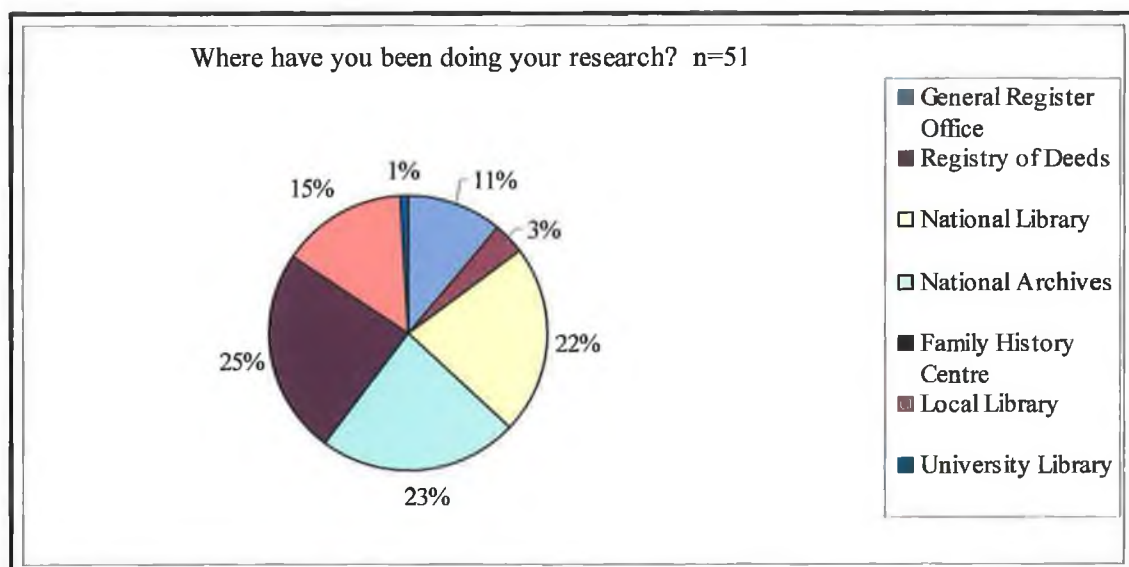


Figure 5.40 Range of Genealogical Primary Records Accessed by ‘Genealogy Tourists’



**Figure 5.41 Range of Genealogical Depositories Accessed by 'Genealogy Tourists'**

The results indicate that nearly fifty percent of respondents had carried out research in Dublin in the National Library and National Archives. Though twenty-five percent of respondents also recorded usage of the family history centres, this data must be viewed with some caution in the light of the survey being conducted partially at the North and South Mayo Family History Centres.

In addition to collecting the data detailed above, respondents were also asked to comment on their overall experiences during their research, on whether they had any useful advice to others doing genealogy research and to suggest ways in which genealogy tourism could be better promoted. The following is a representative selection of those who responded to this section.

Anybody who starts to engage in family history research is advised to start by collecting information and data from family and friends and from the local records office for Certificates of Births Marriages and Deaths. Some respondents recorded difficulty in gathering this information:

Better family records kept by my family ... some way of checking births before sending off for certification.

Prepare research at home. Do all you can to use resources in the USA first.

Talk to relatives, even distant ones; bring as much information with you as you have available.

Use professional researchers from genealogy groups/societies.

Others expressed the need to improve their understanding and methodology:

Better understanding of navigation of available information...and a need to know more about research techniques.



Hold seminars for both beginners and experienced researchers here in Ireland.

...perhaps a procedural handbook, a very simple 1-2-3 step approach to finding your roots.

...short courses in building a family tree. Researching a particular name or area.

Many respondents complained about the inability to carry out their personal research in the family history centres. As one noted, 'It would be nice to do research near where our ancestors came from'. The responses to this question all followed similar themes. Of particular importance was the need to have some help on hand for those unfamiliar with the records or lacking the sufficient research techniques. Although this was addressed at the National Library's Genealogy Advisory Service section, at the time of the field survey in Mayo in summer 2006, work was still in progress on the provision of similar services within the Mayo County Library. The provision of additional services to facilitate hands-on research in conjunction with the IFHF centres is dealt with comprehensively in Chapter Six.

Respondents were also asked what advice they would give to anybody undertaking family history research based on their own experience. The responses were remarkably similar:

Have patience ...perseverance, ...care and patience.

...keep going...takes a long time and needs patience but worth it.

Be careful with research back home...important to come with reliable history

Research in the country of origin. Stay focussed. One family at a time.

The responses revolved around a familiar theme which points to the need for thoroughness, patience and gradually building the database to assemble the family tree.

Much has been written about the replacement of the paper trail research work by Internet research but the feedback from 'Genealogy Tourists' is that whereas Internet-based sources can and do provide much wider access to records, they cannot replace the basic groundwork. 'Plodding' meticulously through family records, photographs and letters, and tracking down living relatives, appear to be the cornerstones of good genealogy research, and as reported, having patience appears to be the common ground for most successful 'Genealogy Tourists'.

This distinguishing trait also has important implications when attempting to assess the value of this market to Irish tourism. Most respondents do not expect to 'hit the jackpot' in their research on the first visit. However, if they are provided with good facilities and helpful guidance, then they are far more likely to return to continue the work in subsequent years.

There is some evidence arising from the feedback that the 'service' experience in the past has fallen well short of expectations, some of which arises from cultural differences and some from misunderstandings about the mission statements, and purpose of the institutions being utilised by the 'Genealogy Tourist'. This has been particularly true in the past of national institutions particularly the GRO, and many of the IFHF centres, which have no facilities for dealing with visitors.

Respondents were also asked to comment on and recommend ways in which genealogy tourism in Ireland could be better promoted and not surprisingly use of the Internet once again featured prominently in their responses:

Advertise the centres on the Internet. I learned of this centre (North Mayo) by accident.

Better on-line accesses...look at LDS records (Latter Day Saints) site which is very easy to find.

Internet access to information directly like the Ellis Island site.

Advertising and promotion also feature in the recommendations including:

Advertise in American magazines (travel) in those with large Irish populations such as New York, Chicago and Boston.

offer a "research week", stay at a B&Bs locally... attend short lectures on research in this area...tell something of the history and have staff assisting people doing their own research.

Have a security pass good for all repositories. Train the staff who handle the records especially at the Valuation Office.

As with the previous responses the main issues are not complex and multi-faceted problems, but focus on some relatively few shortcomings which are, at the time of writing being addressed by the relevant stakeholders. The improvements and work in progress are discussed in Chapter Six, as is the potential to generate genealogy tourism business using educational tours, lectures and training seminars.

### **Focus Group Feedback**

As well as conducting the hardcopy and electronic questionnaire surveys, feedback was also collected from respondents during a Focus Group session of TIARA members on 16 March 2006, during their annual research trip to Dublin. Six respondents who took part in the session were asked what they were expecting from Irish genealogy services and to summarise their wish lists. The responses reflected the ongoing frustrations felt by mainly experienced 'Genealogy Tourists' in not being able to access local family history research centres so as to undertake their own personal searches of the records:



My family come from Cork. I want to visit and see local records.

Local centres have failed. I would not get past the lobby. I gave them my details and I get back the exact same details in a fancy piece of paper. When I walk away, when I go home, I gonna [*sic*] say, "I told them that" That's a deception, that's an Irish thing.

Not only that, if you go to look at the family sources yourself, you read what's there differently.

Right, because we are connected to them...The head of the household may not be the name you actually look but every single person under that person is your family and they may miss that.

Not everyone saw the value of locally-based research facilities:

I came on a trip last year and I'm here again this year...there was talk of some of the depositaries going down to the country – Roscommon, Strokestown, Youghal – decentralisation. One of the beauties of coming to Dublin is that the depositaries are here. I don't want to come to Dublin and catch a train to Roscommon or Youghal. So decentralisation for me is working backwards.

The overriding theme from this (and other feedback from the questionnaires) is the desire to carry out some of the research themselves. At the time these responses were recorded this was, as is evidenced from the responses, not generally possible except in the National Library of Ireland and some major city libraries.

Respondents also commented on some wider issues arising from their research activities:

I have done research in other European countries. I have been to England and done research in the Manchester area...I have been there three to four times where we go to the local studies library and the PRO. Then we go to the places to see what the local church looked like, where is the street, take photographs and talk to people locally. At one point we were doing French-Canadian research and went to my father's ancestral village in Normandy.

I don't just want a list of dates and places. I want to know about the culture, history, the reasons why.

The importance of these observations is that they emphasise the need amongst many people seeking to research their family history, to experience a voyage of discovery, not just intellectually via scholarship and research, but by travelling and experiencing the history, heritage and culture of the countries visited. In the above examples these experiences would clearly have been diverse and would have contributed to a better understanding of the cultural mix passed down to the present generation. These perceived needs and wants are important pointers when examining the development of genealogy as a viable tourism product.

The development of incremental tourism opportunities as a direct spin off from family history research also emerged from the focus group responses. Not every family member has time and energy to spend on what can be a highly focussed and time consuming

activity. Many family members may be in full-time employment leaving the research to retired family members as highlighted by the questionnaire results discussed earlier. This is illustrated by the following observation:

There is something to keep in mind. My sister and I do family research for the Irish side of the family. We do have family reunions from time to time and we usually have new information. Everyone has a notebook and collects new information. Many of my cousins have come to England because we have certain information. They haven't looked up a single bit of information but they went to the towns. So it's not just the genealogists that are interested.

The group also commented on the motivational factors which stimulated them to undertake family history research. Some important clues emerged from this part of the session as to why genealogy tourism and family history research has been very much a mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon. Apart from the economic, social and demographic changes, such as increased leisure time and affordable travel, more powerful, emotional forces appear to have been awoken, particularly amongst third generation Irish-Americans who were generally descended from the outgoing tide of economic refugees from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century.

The distinctive differences between emigration to North America and to other parts of the English speaking world, particularly Britain, was that 19<sup>th</sup> century Irish emigrants to North America entered at the very bottom of the social 'ladder' which comprised a mix of mainly European economic and political refugees, where each ethnic group faced complex challenges presented by this multi-cultural melting pot. By contrast, Irish emigrants to, for example, mainland Britain entered a largely mono-cultural society not dissimilar to that which they had left. Britain's Industrial Revolution was extremely labour intensive and the rapidly expanding manufacturing towns of the English North and Midlands absorbed much of the Irish emigration into its already 'pear shaped' social system. This was comprised of a small, aristocratic, factory-owning elite and middle class merchants and professionals, beneath which toiled a vast underclass of workers.

Australia had an advantage over America in the great homogeneity of its white population. Since the members of this population all belonged to one race, the development of social institutions could proceed more easily.<sup>21</sup> But by far and away the most compelling argument that emigration to North America had unique cultural and social differences from emigration in the rest of the English speaking world, was that the

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<sup>21</sup> For a discussion, see Eric Richards, *Britannia's Children: Emigration from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland since 1600* (Hambledon, London, 2004).

emigrant was, in many cases, not only leaving for a chance of improving the quality of life but for the vast majority of disenfranchised landless cottiers, was leaving for a 'new' life. This was a 'new life' in a 'new' country which was not part of the British Empire and where the laws and constitution did not mirror the social and legal system from which they were 'escaping'.

Prior to 1922, Irish emigrants were British subjects and legally treated as such by all recipient countries. Their perceived status, unless transported as convicts during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, was that of colonist in any country within the British Empire and of emigrants outside of that sphere of influence. This anomaly between the two classifications is outlined by Penn, who notes that 'Colonisation was not emigration, but "home flitting to another part of the same land".<sup>22</sup> Even at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the attitudes towards emigration/colonisation clearly differentiated between the two. This extract from a survey, *The Empire and the Century*, quoting from a contributor, Colonel Owen Thomas, aptly sums up the distinction:

the emigrant breaks with his past, closes the value of his British birth, with all the pride that it includes, and puts it from him altogether, or retains it only as a good which he may have to attain again for the comfort of his declining years...With the colonist it is quite different. His national traditions unaltered and his national affections unshaken...Migration from one part of the Empire to another should involve no greater uprooting, no further loss of English sentiment to a colonist, than the transfer of residence from London to say, the depth of a Hertfordshire village.<sup>23</sup>

Although this observation may well reflect an extreme view, for significant numbers of Irish emigrants to the 'New World' the concept of 'breaking with your past' seems to have a resonance which was more acute than for 'colonists'. Also it is impossible to ignore the irony that they or their forebears were themselves 'victims' of a colonisation process as a result of the New English Plantation strategy.

Comments from the focus group reflect this in their memories of their contacts with older members of their families. Bearing in mind the age profile of the group (55-70+), as young children, their contacts would, in many cases, have been part of that first generation emigrant group.

Older generations in many cases did not bring with them cherished memories of the old country but rather closed their minds to the conditions which had prompted them to

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<sup>22</sup> Penn, cited in *Ibid.* p. 227.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

leave. The following comments reflect this apparent reluctance of older members of the respondent's families to pass on family history:

My grandparents rarely talked about where they came from. There were family tragedies they wanted to bury and forget about.

They walked away, either by force or because there was nothing for them to cling onto.

...they would say you are now American. That was then, this is now. We don't want to talk about those days.

They wanted to assimilate. They didn't want a heritage that they walked away from.

I was not allowed to talk to my grandparents. I could listen but I was not allowed to question...

Part of this reluctance to pass on the sometimes bitter memories of their life and times in Ireland may also have been due to the fact that emigration to America had allowed them to 'create identities that might differ significantly from the categories imposed on them by public officials, landlord's clergy or even kinsmen'.<sup>24</sup> It is understandable, therefore, that integrated Irish emigrants moving up the social and economic ladders of their new homeland, would at that time have been reluctant to admit to their humble origins even in communities consisting of neighbours with very similar experiences.

Growing up in this historically sterile environment, raising families and becoming themselves part of the older generation, the late 20<sup>th</sup> century descendants of Irish-American emigrants are now seeking to research their past and fill in the missing pieces of the family history 'jigsaw puzzle'. Part of the quest is motivated by the irony of being asked questions by younger members of the family for which, unlike their forbears, they have no answers. More complex reasons may be found in the growing dilution of their ethnic past as family members marry into a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic American society. This process, David Lloyd argues has been augmented recently by the successes of liberal 'multiculturalism', which has left many white Americans, whose roots are now entangled in the soil of several European lands, seeking the cultural distinctiveness that they have learned to be a privilege of ethnic minorities.<sup>25</sup> The responses from the focus group underscore this reawakening of the past:

My grandfather never spoke to me. But why did I get an interest in family history? Around 50-60 I started to ask who am I, why I am, where do I come from.

<sup>24</sup> K. A. Miller, "'Scotch-Irish': Myths and 'Irish' Identities in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century America", in C. Fanning (ed.), *New Perspectives on the Irish Diaspora* (Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, 2000), p. 75.

<sup>25</sup> C. Nash, "Genealogical Identities", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* Vol. 20, (2002), p. 36.

My family members were dying off and if the family history is not put down it will be lost.

I grew up in a family of great story tellers. My mother was not Irish but she knew stories about Ireland. I became interested in Irish history and culture.

I started research because I had lost so many people who were important to me and this is the way of bringing, especially my paternal grandfather, back to me. And now I see his parents. I see his brothers and sisters. I see them so I have re-created a full family. And now I come over here and see where they lived and came from and that is the whole package for me.

## Conclusion

Genealogy services in County Mayo are well managed and the public and private organisations have, between them, access to an extensive archive of material much of which is unique to the county. The staff at the Irish Family History Foundation Centres and at Clew Bay are well trained and have a high satisfaction rating for the research work that they undertake on behalf of their clients. However, 'Genealogy Tourists' have been very critical about the lack of facilities, other than at the county libraries and the National Library of Ireland, to carry out their own research. The tracing and researching of documents is believed to be a significant part of their 'voyage of discovery' and a key element in the decision to travel to Ireland. Although there is no absolute evidence that this negative input has impacted on genealogy tourism, informants from specialist groups like TIARA are of the opinion that without the ability to access records locally there is no incentive to travel out of Dublin other than on sightseeing tours.

Nonetheless, there is potential to encourage genealogy tourism by adopting new initiatives and responding to the feedback gathered from the fieldwork. Mayo County Library is developing its research facilities to cater for the needs of the genealogy visitor. It is also working closely with the family history centres to provide online links to church and other local archives. The fieldwork also confirmed the strong links between family history research and the wider interests in the county's extensive cultural and historical past, including the remaining material evidence of the economic and social upheavals of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These spaces and locations preserved as deserted villages, famine museums, heritage farms, and other cultural centres provide the basis to develop integrated holistic holiday experiences, where family history research may be undertaken as part of a more complete connection with the life and times of the visitor's ancestors. These developments and opportunities are reviewed in detail in the next chapter.

The fieldwork further confirmed that the visitor experience of County Mayo was generally positive and met expectations. There are some question marks, however, over

value for money, particularly in the hospitality sector where food and drink were perceived to be expensive. This was more acute with visitors from the US facing an adverse US Dollar to Euro exchange rate. The other key issue which needs to be addressed is the poor transport infrastructure not just within the county itself but also for connections to major airports and seaports. Significant improvements are projected under the *National Development Plan 2007-2013* regarding the building of new highways and rail links. However, within the county the only practical way for a tourist to comprehensively visit the major places of interest is by hired car. A new transatlantic service from New York/Boston to Knock International Airport opened in May 2007, but significant improvements in the transport infrastructure from Knock will be required if maximum benefit to be derived from this opportunity.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

# **Developing a Marketing Strategy for Genealogy as a Tourism Product in Co. Mayo**

## Introduction

The previous two chapters examined the history and structure of the genealogy industry in County Mayo, its strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities open to it, and the threats that it faces. The core objective of this chapter is to examine the potential of genealogy as a sustainable component of County Mayo's tourism product portfolio which can be easily promoted and marketed. The results of the baseline audit in the previous chapter suggest that while genealogy tourism is unlikely to generate adequate tourism revenue as a stand alone product, it has the potential to be a valuable and attractive niche product when linked in with a tourism package aimed at marketing the county's built and natural heritage and its extensive culture and history. But if the undertaking of family history research is to be considered as a viable part of County Mayo's tourism 'product mix', then the product needs to be re-imagined so that researchers may experience the 'buzz' and excitement of self-discovery by 'hands-on' access to the records. This chapter examines recent attempts by the family history research centres and the Mayo County Library network to integrate their resources, so as to provide seamless access to the total genealogical resources of the county via a public-private partnership which includes the use of the Internet to undertake research

The potential to harness these developments to promote genealogy tourism in the county as an integrated part of a marketable cultural and heritage product, is examined against the background of the ways in which key visitor attractions located within the county which relate to and support cultural and heritage tourism are presented and managed. Special regard is given to their relevance to various national, regional and county development plans. These include *The National Development Plan 2007-2013*, specifically the sub-programme for product development which deals with the development of genealogy products, a new strategy for Irish tourism from 2003-2012 and the Mayo County Development Board's 10-year integrated development plan from 2002-2012.<sup>1</sup> The views and submissions of local interest groups in the county are also considered, including the Kiltimagh Integrated Rural Development Group, The Westport

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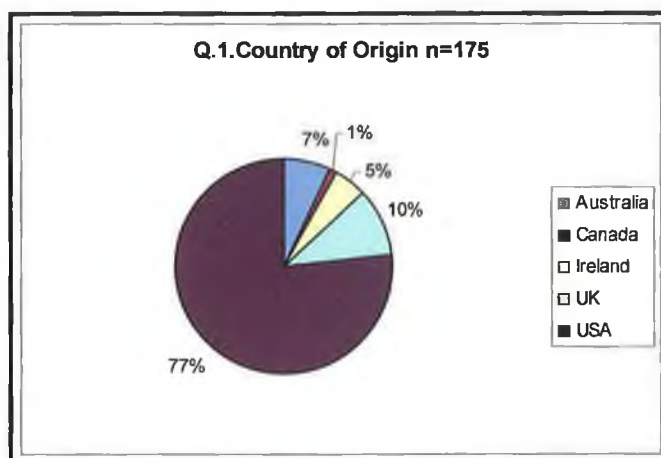
<sup>1</sup> Tourism Policy Review Group, *New Horizons for Irish Tourism: An Agenda for Action* (Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, Dublin, 2003); Mayo County Development Board, *10-Year Integrated Strategy for the Economic, Social and Cultural Development of County Mayo, 2002-2012* (Mayo County Development Board, Castlebar, 2002); Government of Ireland, *National Development Plan 2007-2013: Transforming Ireland: A Better Quality of Life for All* (The Stationary Office, Dublin, 2007).



Tourism Organisation (which has successfully promoted Westport as an attractive tourist destination), the Clew Bay Heritage Centre, and the North and South Mayo Family Research History Centres.

### **The Development of Internet Access to Genealogical Resources**

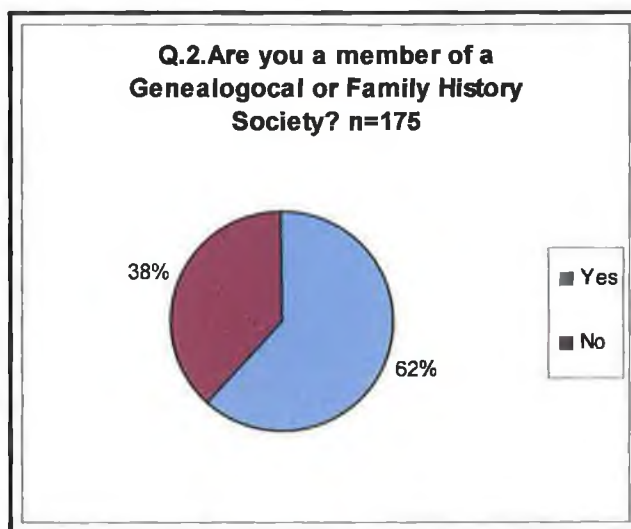
The growing availability of genealogy data and resources on the Internet since the late 1990s has had a profound effect on the methodology employed in undertaking genealogy research. It has on the one hand, elevated genealogy from a relatively sedate pastime enjoyed by a small minority of professional and amateur researchers, into a major leisure time pursuit, followed by millions, particularly from North America and the United Kingdom. The downside to the ease with which data can be assembled from the comfort of the armchair has been a perceived, albeit unquantifiable reduction in the number of 'Genealogy Tourists' visiting Ireland to trace their family roots via the network of public and private sources. In order to gain a better understanding of this process, an electronic questionnaire was developed to gain responses from a target audience which was engaged in genealogy research aimed at tracing Irish ancestral ties. A total of 175 responses to the electronic questionnaire were received – the majority of which originated in the USA.



**Figure 6.1 Respondents' Profile: Country of Origin**

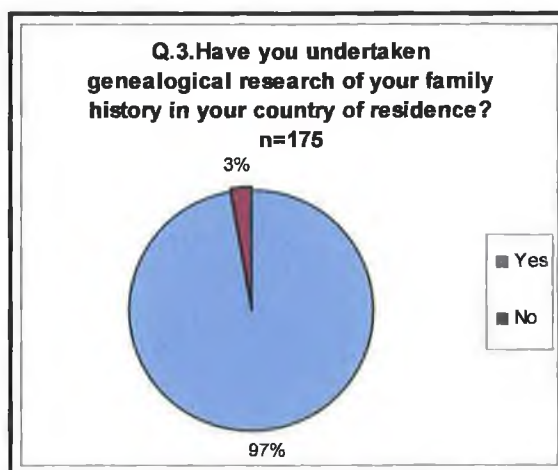
Although the electronic questionnaire was aimed at the widest possible audience via family history societies and magazines, the significant response from the USA, although not unexpected, was higher than anticipated. Nonetheless the percentage of genealogy respondents from the USA (77%) compares closely to that of the field research results (70%), although no precise correlation between the two results is claimed. Almost two-thirds of the respondents claimed affiliation to a genealogical or family history society (Figure 6.2). Because of the random nature of the electronic questionnaire distribution, it is not possible to calculate the different response rates from members of societies and

readers of magazines, but the results serve as a pointer as to where to direct any future marketing of genealogy-based cultural and heritage tourism. Advertising in magazines or journals in any format can be both expensive and difficult to measure in terms of positive responses. Whereas direct contact with specific organisations and societies has the potential to produce positive feedback with relatively little direct costs.



**Figure 6.2 Respondents' Classification**

Practically all respondents (97%) had some experience of researching home-based national and local resources and depositaries (Figures 6.3 and 6.4).



**Figure 6.3 Respondents' Research Experience**

The importance of locating family records, particularly as a starting point in any family research quest, is illustrated in Figure 6.4. The same percentage, 97% (Figure 6.5), claimed to have accessed the Internet during their research in their own country but slightly less, 85%, used the Internet to access records in Ireland. It is not absolutely clear as to the underlying reasons behind the lower figure, but direct access to many Irish

resources are only just coming on stream and this may well have had an effect on the usage rate.

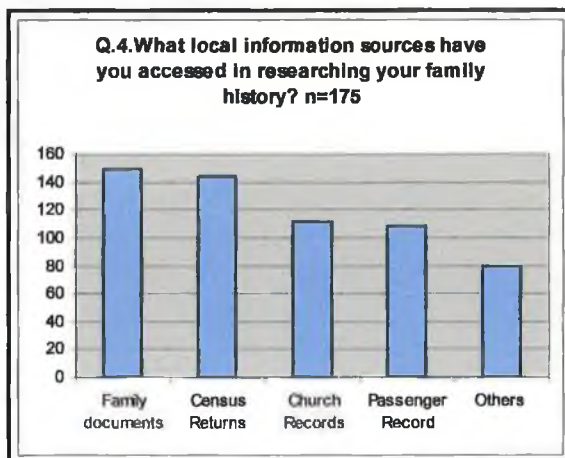


Figure 6.4 Respondents' Research Methodology

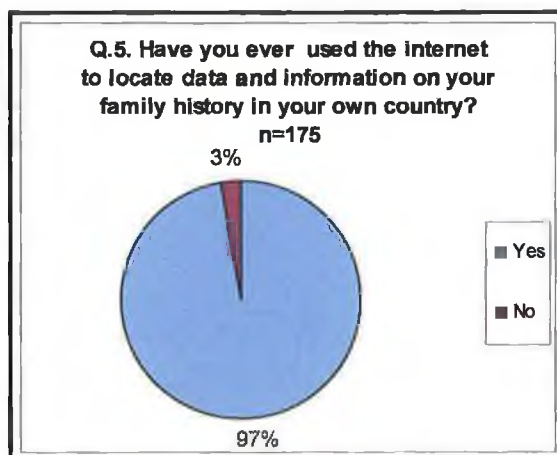


Figure 6.5 Respondents' Local Internet Experience

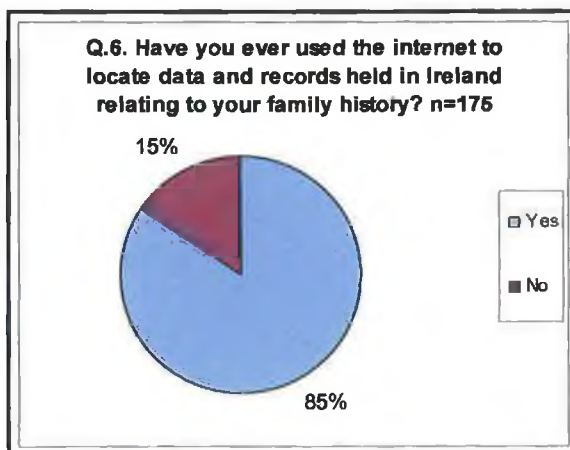
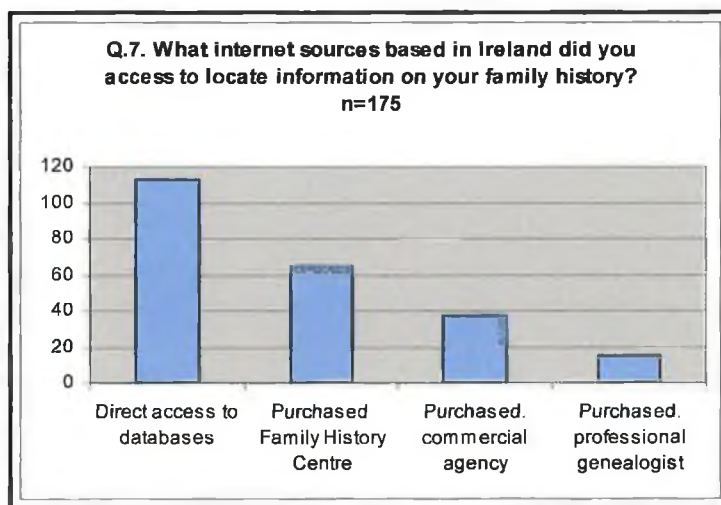


Figure 6.6 Respondents' Internet Experience Using Irish Databases

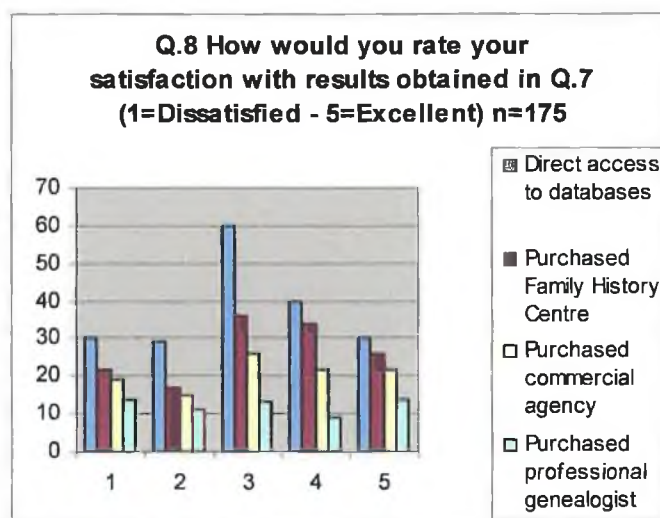
The progress in providing a comprehensive range of Internet resources in County Mayo is discussed later in this chapter. Another underlying reason for the reduced rate of usage in Ireland compared to the USA is that whereas access to genealogical sources in

the USA is mostly free (Church of Latter Day Saints, National Records, Washington), many similar records in Ireland are only available on payment of a fee. Also obtaining information on-line can be problematic because it involves the interchange of e-mail correspondence to establish the relevant family connections followed by 'snail mail' replies from the Irish sources containing hard copy documents and other data. The level of the commercially available Irish data as opposed to direct access is illustrated in Figure 6.7.



**Figure 6.7 Information Channels for Irish Genealogical Data**

The results in Figure 6.7 indicate a clear preference for obtaining information from sites which allow direct access. The reasons behind this preference become clearer when respondents were asked to give a satisfaction rating for each source (Figure 6.8).



**Figure 6.8 Respondents' Acceptability Levels for Irish Genealogy Sources**

That there is a direct correlation between respondents being able to access genealogical resources directly, and the high satisfaction score they allocate to this element of their research, supports the evidence outlined in the previous chapter from individual

informants and focus groups. Finding new branches and roots within the family tree is a personal voyage of discovery whereas the use of 'guides', in the form of paid researchers is the least preferred option. The ease of direct access to data has, as previously discussed, been a key factor in elevating genealogy research to a major activity in the larger centres of the Irish Diaspora and has made the key word 'genealogy' one of the most used search terms on the Internet.<sup>2</sup> Some measure of this impact on the growth of interest in this subject, spurred on by Internet access can be seen from the data collated from respondents who were asked to indicate over what period they have conducted their research (Figure 6.9).

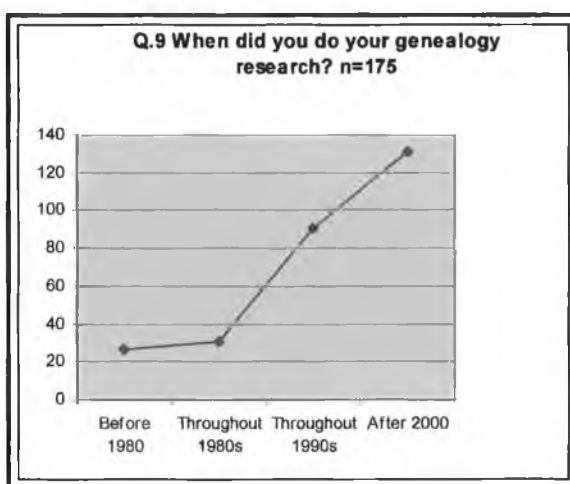


Figure 6.9 Growth of Genealogy Research Attributed to Access to Internet Databases

### Genealogy Tourism and the Internet

A recent development in the expanding world of Internet use has been the arrival of a 'virtual reality' game known as Second Life. In this game players can adopt an alternative persona and live in a city-state called Lyndon, and work, trade and buy property using Lyndon Dollars which are convertible to US dollars on EBay. Over six million players have enrolled in this game and it is thought that a few 'early adopters' have made real US\$ millions by cornering prize real estate. It is believed that a significant minority of the players spend as much if not more time in this virtual existence as in the 'real' world. This is an extreme example of a growing phenomenon, namely, that the Internet can provide a close substitute to the 'real thing' when it comes to generating the kind of emotions felt when exploring new horizons, for example, virtual museums, exhibitions, travelogues, and art galleries. Recently, a similar analogy has been made about the

<sup>2</sup> The search engine 'Google' produced nearly 36 million references.

extensive use of Internet research in genealogy research. Under the banner headline “Tourism Loses Out as Ireland’s Expats Find Roots on the Web”,<sup>3</sup> *The Sunday Times* reported that;

‘Genealogy Tourists’ no longer need to come to Ireland or visit its 35 genealogy centres, in order to find their roots. The Mormon Church in Salt Lake City has posted an enormous searchable database of births and deaths on the net, while Ellis Island immigration records have also been computerised.

The complex nature of Irish genealogy research which is compounded by the problematic issue of surnames and place names has been discussed earlier, and suggests that remote research may well lead the researcher up ‘blind alleys’. Respondents to the questionnaires and from the focus group discussions emphasised that they placed high importance on the hands-on tracing of local documents and records, and the ability to seek out local knowledge to fine tune their general research data. Moreover the research findings in Chapter Five demonstrated the emotional connection between the discovery via research of ancestral connections, and the matching of those connections with the natural, built and cultural environment in which those ancestors lived.

In order to establish some quantifiable data on the relationship between remote (Internet) and field-based genealogical research, respondents to the electronic questionnaire (which for the purpose of this analysis are called ‘Internet Genealogists’), were asked to indicate what, if any, experience they had of visiting Ireland, and to comment, insofar as possible within the limitations and scope of the electronic questionnaire, on their experiences. A high proportion, 81%, of all respondents, indicated that they had visited Ireland previously (Figure 6.10) and 74% of that number had made the journey to either exclusively or partially undertake research into their family history (Figure 6.11). Although this data is not supported by any supplementary detail which would have given a clearer picture as to when these visits took place, the fact that a significant number of respondents actively took up research during the early 2000s (Figure 6.10) and visited Ireland to specifically further that research, points to a positive target market for any future genealogy tourism promotion.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Sunday Times* 2 October 2005.



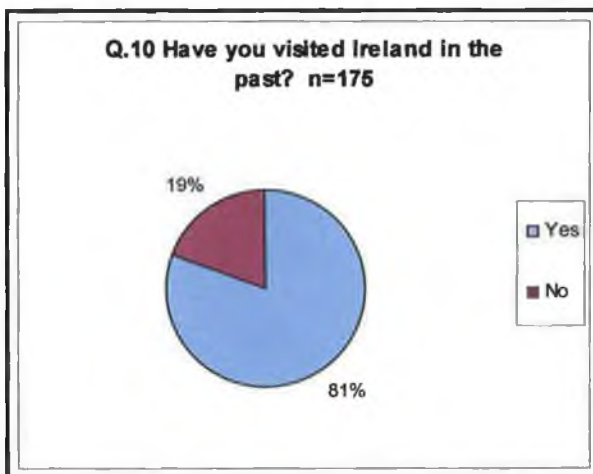


Figure 6.10 Respondents' Previous Visits to Ireland

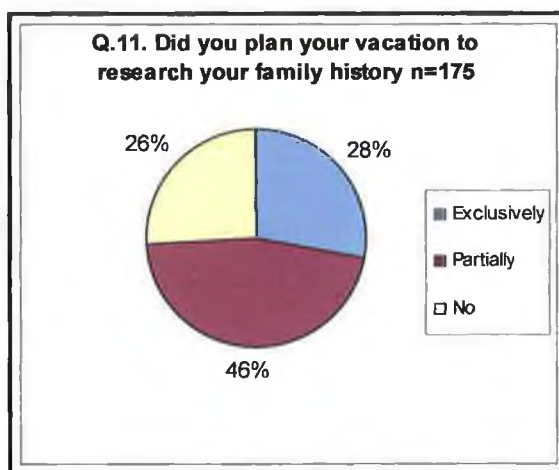


Figure 6.11 Respondents' Planned Genealogy Tourism

'Internet Genealogists' visiting Ireland indicated that they followed an itinerary which took in both national and regional archives as illustrated in Figure 6.12.

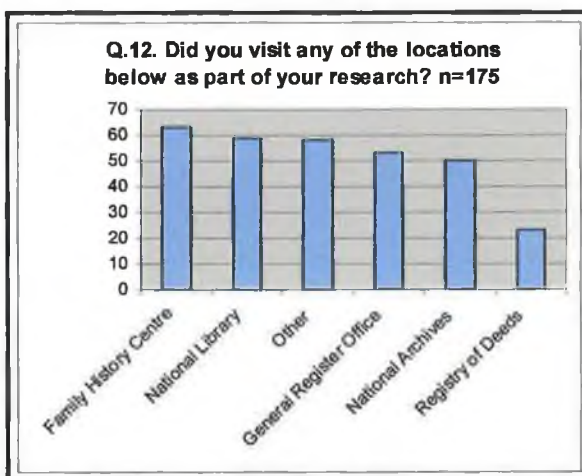
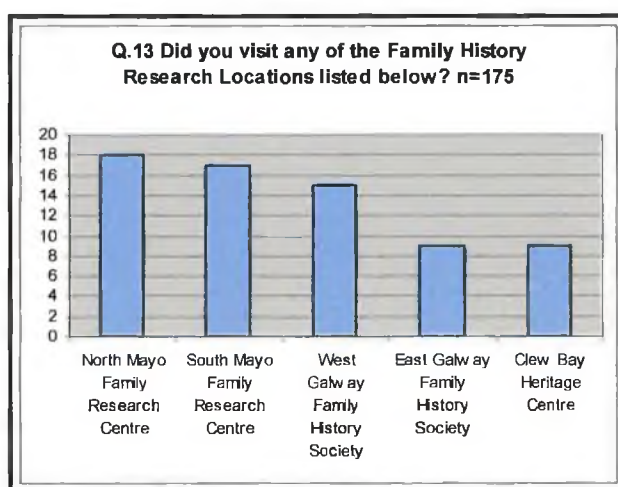


Figure 6.12 Principal Locations of Repositories for 'Internet Genealogists'

It is not clear from the survey which locations were visited under the sub-heading 'Other' and again this is weakness of gathering data via remote electronic methods where brevity is a key issue in gaining a workable response rate. However, as already noted, there are many other sources of information for the intrepid 'Genealogy Tourist' including graveyards, parish churches and local libraries and it is to be assumed that these locations would feature in this category. The general choice of key depositories is not dissimilar to that which emerged from the field survey in County Mayo (Figure 5.23) and it is clear from this data that any visit to Ireland which involves travel to both Dublin and one or more regional centres, is likely to extend to more than one week.

Figure 6.13 reveals that visiting a Family History Centre ranks high on the list despite the limitations on direct access. The survey, at this point focussed exclusively on centres in County Mayo and County Galway and the respondents were asked specific details relating to these locations. All the centres located in Mayo and in the adjoining county of Galway were visited (Figure 6.14) but no particular significance can be attached to the ranking except that North Mayo does have a well-developed visitor centre at Enniscoe House and gardens. Respondents were also asked to allocate a satisfaction rating to each of the centres (Figure 6.15).



**Figure 6.13 Internet Genealogist' Family Research Centre Preferences**

The results of the satisfaction ratings from the 'Internet Genealogists' mirror closely those of other respondents detailed earlier. Since none of the centres have facilities for visitors to conduct their own research, it has to be assumed that this rating assessment relates to information provided at the time of the visit or alternatively information forwarded on to the visitors' home address at a later date. Delays in this process have featured as one of the key complaint areas associated with the IFHF centres.



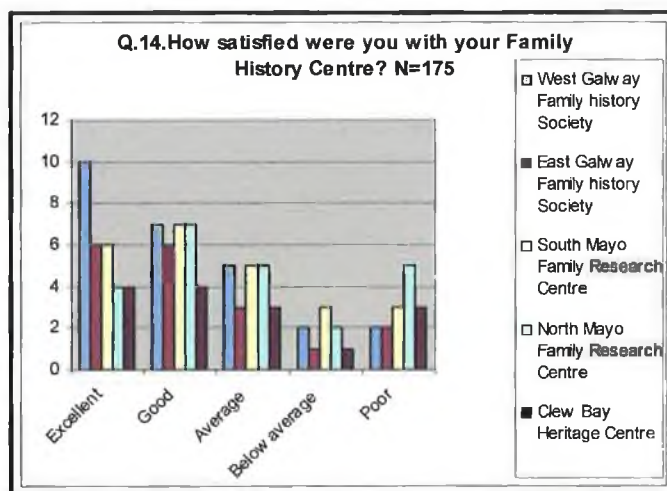


Figure 6.14 Satisfaction Rating of Selected Family History Centre Locations

Respondents who visited the local centres detailed above were asked to indicate the source of the information, which initially pointed them to the locations (Figure 6.15). Since all the locations have well established websites, not surprisingly most of the respondents cited the Internet as the most likely point of reference for this information. The prominence of this information source over all other media has significant importance in the promotion of genealogy tourism as will be discussed later.

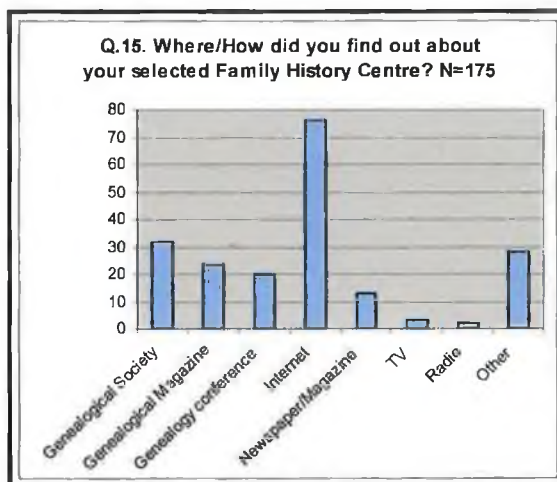


Figure 6.15 Information Sources for Locating Family History

The results of the survey indicate that although the Internet is used extensively in family history research there is still a very high degree of awareness of resources accessible in Ireland, which in many cases may not be included in accessible electronic data bases. Internet respondents were aware of the Family History Centres and contrary to the proposition that Internet research had effectively obviated the need to research Irish-based sources; the majority of respondents had visited Ireland and had included one or more centres on their visit. That they were not able to gain access to records and undertake their own research in the Centres reflects the general view gained from this

research and is also reflected in the satisfaction ratings given to individual centres as much as it is of the quality of the information obtained.

### **Marketing Genealogy as a Tourism Strategy**

The challenge facing the Family History Centres is to respond positively to the criticisms arising from the results of the baseline audit and the growing trend of online Internet research. The results of the audit highlight the importance attached to cultural history and heritage, which can be found in rich abundance in County Mayo. Almost from the beginning of the Irish Genealogy Project, it has been recognised that building the genealogical databases was always a means to an end. Commenting on the impact of the Internet on tourism, Eamon Rossi, the former CEO of Irish Genealogy Limited said that the database was used as a 'hook' to attract tourists to Ireland:

there is a lot of information available, so we try to sell the emotional experience of coming here and walking the land...Genealogy is a motivator for people; it encourages them to differentiate between Ireland and, say, Scotland.<sup>4</sup>

However, genealogical research, as undertaken by the Family History Centres in County Mayo, has not been marketed as a component part of any comprehensive tourism plan for the county. It is not included in the *County Mayo Heritage Plan 2005-2010* and unlike fishing, golf, horse riding and walking, has no specific part to play in the marketing strategies being developed by Ireland West, which, as a division of Tourism Ireland, has responsibility for delivering the tourism targets and objectives under the *County Mayo Development Plan*.

As has been demonstrated, descendants of the Irish Diaspora from countries other than the USA, particularly the UK, visit Ireland to research their past and visit the places inhabited by their ancestors but visitors from the USA represent the mainstay of such activity. Thus the omission of genealogy tourism from current and proposed marketing strategies for the county is even more surprising in the light of the acknowledgment by Tourism Ireland that

Visitors from the United States account for 18% of total revenue to the island of Ireland. The US visitor spent 60% more than the average visitor per trip...activities of a historical and cultural interest remains the most popular with US holiday makers.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Rossi, cited in *The Sunday Times*, 2 October 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Tourism Ireland, *United States Market Profile 2006* (Tourism Ireland, Dublin, 2006), p. 1.

The recognition of the value of US tourism is highlighted in Chapter 5 (Figure 5.8) in the survey of general and genealogy tourism in the county, as is the very high importance placed by the visitors on cultural and heritage

It is possible that the sudden drop post 2000 in identifiable 'Genealogy Tourists' from a high of over 100,000 per annum to less than 40,000 in 2004 may have influenced this apparent lack of recognition by Tourism Ireland. In any event if the potential for family history research to generate additional incremental tourism in the county is to be realised, then it rests with the family history centres themselves to act as a catalyst for this revival. If they can succeed in putting genealogy back on the agenda as a viable and valuable contribution to generating tourism in County Mayo, then their future viability, currently in some doubt without continuous support from FÁS and other state agencies, may be more assured.

An important potential ally in moving genealogy research from its present position as a peripheral and almost invisible activity within the broad span of the *County Mayo Heritage Plan* to a more inclusive element of that plan is the county library and in particular the local history section.

### **Mayo County Library**

Mayo County Library, based in Castlebar, contains a wealth of material to assist in ancestral research including microfilm records of the Tithe Applotment Books c. 1830, a record of property holders in each parish in Mayo and the amount of tax levied for the upkeep of the established church, and Griffith's Valuation 1855-1857 (which includes lists of all property holders in each townland in County Mayo and the person from whom the property was leased and the size of the holding). The library also holds the Census of Ireland 1901 & 1911 on microfilm for County Mayo which gives the names of every individual in each house, their age, religion, occupation, marital status, relationship to head of household, ability to read and write, and ability to speak. Irish Parish Records for Oughaval, Burrishoole, Achill, and Ballycroy are also available in the library. In addition, records are available for gravestone inscriptions for Castlebar Old Cemetery, Meelick Old Cemetery, Meelick New Cemetery, and Bushfield.

The library also has a complete set of Ordnance Survey maps for 1839 and 1900, which are available both on microfilm and by direct access via the Internet. Supporting this collection are the Ordnance Survey Field Name Books, compiled during the Ordnance Survey of County Mayo in 1838. These books give a list of townlands in each

parish, their names in Irish and their meaning. They also give a brief description of the physical features of each townland and the proprietor of the land is usually given.

Of special interest to genealogy researchers is the EMILE project, which is funded by the European Union, and aims to compare and contrast the experiences of European emigrants to America by analysing the letters they sent home. Participants in the project include museums and libraries in Sweden, Italy, Poland, and the Czech Republic, with Mayo County Library representing Ireland.

An informal link has existed for some years between Mayo County Library and the family history centres, with the County Librarian serving as a director of Mayo North Family History Research Centre. The library receives a steady stream of letters, phone calls and latterly e-mails from genealogy researchers requesting details of records, maps and other references including church records, which are not available from the library as the Assistant County Librarian recalled:

We get a lot of letters, mostly e-mails now. Someone might be coming, booking their holidays. They want to know what we have...do they have to book the machines [microfilm readers, fiche, photocopiers]. We get English, Americans, Australians, and Canadians. We have the Ordnance Survey maps for 1839 and 1900, Griffith's Valuation and the Tithe Applotment books. If they ask for parish records we sometimes send them to the Parish Priest. But some of them are old and not interested so we send them to Ballinrobe for South Mayo and Ennisceoe for North Mayo. We tell them that if they have got plenty of time then go to see the relevant Parish Priest but if not go to the heritage centre but they do charge. Some of them [enquirers] think it should be free, and get a shock when told there is a charge.<sup>6</sup>

Since the date of the interview with the Assistant County Librarian, this informal relationship has been upgraded to one in which the North and South Mayo Family History Centres have received financial support from Mayo County Council to develop online access to their database of church records. This facility, which became fully operational in late May 2007, is accessible on the Internet directly from the Mayo County Council library site. The site operates on a pay-per-view system whereby members may access the database by purchasing a block of credits, a minimum of 10, which allows access to one record per credit. There is no time limit on how long it may take to use up the credit block. The advantage of this system is that whereas previously an enquiry may have resulted in a number of chargeable searches which later proved to be dead ends, the researcher may now progress at their own speed and eliminate results with the minimum of wasted effort and cost.

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Librarian, Local History Department, Mayo County Library, dated 6 July 2006.

The introduction of this method of direct access very largely overcomes the majority of the criticisms and complaints made by 'Genealogy Tourists' and respondents to both field and other surveys when attempting to undertake research as part of a holiday in the county. Mayo County Library provides facilities for desk research and access to many of the important records as listed earlier and the parish record databases of the two IFHF centres may be accessed from the library computer terminals. It is intended that other records compiled and maintained at the family history centres, including gravestones, other burial records and records of unique local significance will be added in due course. The system does not connect to the Clew Bay Family History Centre, which is not part of the IFHF, and at the time of writing there are no apparent plans to do so.

These important changes in the centres' focus and purpose present significant threats to, and opportunities for, their continued existence. There is a danger that by opening up access to the database via an on line pay-per-view system, all work may be done online and the centres may lose the small but valuable incremental income which they earn by compiling full family searches as well as the loss of physical 'Genealogy Tourists' to the county in general. In addition the justification for some if not all of the financial support from state and other funding sources, which has kept the centres viable over the past 25 years, might disappear. However, these changes also present an opportunity for the centres to review the closure of Mayo Genealogy Marketing Company Limited, which was established in 1998 by the centres but which was wound up in 2005 because of a lack of funding to finance the staffing and overheads. This company sought to use genealogy as a device to generate new business opportunities. There is now a strong case for this company's business plan to be revisited to include marketing and organising cultural and heritage tourism based around the genealogy product as part of the product mix. The research detailed earlier has identified the 'Genealogy Tourist' as someone with a higher than average propensity to spend, an age profile which allows for greater leisure time than the norm, and with an above average interest in Irish culture, heritage and history. Furthermore the changes in the patterns of world tourism have presented new challenges to Fáilte Ireland. Rising costs, which have translated into higher prices, have created the need to re-examine the way in which Ireland is promoted as a major destination, and Fáilte Ireland emphasises the necessity to provide high quality value-for-money activity holidays which will not just meet, but which will exceed, expectations. The natural and built heritage of County Mayo which, as described below, is presented throughout the county in many high quality museums and centres and other tourist destinations, and the

richness of its cultural tradition, suggest that marketing and promoting a focussed cultural and heritage-based holiday experience in County Mayo built around a core product of genealogy tourism would seem to meet Fáilte Ireland's criteria.

### **The Business of Tourism**

Irish tourism is the most important sector of Irish-owned business activity in the Irish state. It employs around 150,000 workers and generates upwards of €5 billion of foreign revenue earnings, equivalent to half the value of exports by all Irish-owned manufacturing companies.<sup>7</sup> Equally important is the fact that, unlike foreign owned, multinational business enterprises which have contributed significantly to the Irish economy in the last decade, the business base cannot be moved to more economically favourable parts of the globe as economic conditions change. However, the downside to this is that the existing customer base is not tied to the tourism industry and can, and indeed does, choose to travel to new destinations. The challenge, therefore, for Irish tourism is to remain competitive against these new destinations, not so much in the area of price as in the area of value-for money, as is highlighted in the baseline audit. This challenge needs to be met not just by better cost controls and increased productivity, but by innovative product development which goes beyond simply meeting tourists' expectations. Tourism enterprises which deliver high quality and/or unique products and services gain a competitive advantage over other enterprises competing for tourism revenue, where price alone is not the selection criteria. As expressed in the third and final report of the *Tourism Action Plan Implementation Group*, published in 2006, commissioned by the Minister of Arts, Sport and Tourism:

Much of what has been achieved is taken as a "given" by ever more discerning tourists. In themselves, the facilities put in place do not, in general, provide a competitive advantage or compelling reason for visitors to come to Ireland. There is a need for greater progress in the provision, development and effective marketing, of a wide range of activities, which provide visitors with a positive and "unforgettable" experience.<sup>8</sup>

The problem facing the industry in responding to these challenges is that it is composed of a fragmented network of public and private enterprises ranging in size from airlines such as Ryanair down to four bedroom guesthouses or B&Bs. Although minimum standards of service provision can be enforced by regulatory bodies and government

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<sup>7</sup> Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism, *Tourism Action Implementation Group: Third and Final Progress Report* (Department of Arts Sports and Tourism, Dublin, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p. v.

agencies such as Fáilte Ireland, the sheer complexity of the industry structure makes the implementation of a co-ordinated and consolidated business plan difficult to achieve without the co-operation and commitment of the service providers. Recent price inflation, particularly in the provision of food and drink, and highlighted in the above report, are evidence of this uncontrollable, yet critical element of Ireland's tourism product mix. Figure 6.16 outlines the key sectors, services, and structures of the tourism industry in Ireland.

SUB-SECTOR	SERVICES	STRUCTURE
Transport	Airlines & Shipping Companies, Air and Sea Ports, Internal Transport-Bus, Rail Services, Car Hire, Coach Tours	Mainly public and larger companies-except in the case of coach and car hire
Accommodation	Hotels, Guesthouses, B&B', Self Catering, Hostels, Caravan and Camping Parks, University Campus, Host Homes.	Mainly SME's although larger hotel groups are growing in number
Food	Accommodation providers, Restaurants, Pubs, Fast Food Outlets, Shops.	SME's apart from larger hotel groups
Facilities/Amenities	Historical sites, Houses,, Gardens,, Museums, Art Galleries, Theatres, Entertainment, Pubs.	SME's and State enterprises
Activities	Golf, Walking, Angling, Cycling, Cabin Cruising, Equestrian Activities, Events, Sailing, Other Water Based Pursuits, Shopping, Language Schools, and Genealogy	SME's almost exclusively except in the case of cabin cruising
Basic Services	Petrol Stations, Banking, Communications, Tourist Information, Other Retail Outlets	Mainly SME's but including major companies in Banking Services and Petrol Distribution

Figure 6.16 Main Sub-Sectors, Structure of the Tourism Industry in Ireland

Source: Fáilte Ireland

Whilst it is evident that short of a dictatorship, it would not be possible to centrally control such a diverse range of services and structures, nonetheless the public sector does have a major role to play in providing essential facilities, structures and controls to create an environment within which the non-governmental agencies and private enterprises could be expected to develop and grow their individual products and services. These public sector elements include the provision of infrastructure, particularly in the area of transport and access, building regulation and environmental protection, and the protection and preservation of the natural, cultural and heritage resources which form the 'jewel in the crown' of Ireland's tourism attractions.

Moreover, since price or value-for-money comparisons are now high on the list of negative feedbacks from visitor experiences, a requirement to pay close attention to fiscal policies, particularly VAT, which may adversely impact on this sector, lies clearly within the public service remit.

An indication of the complex mix of government departments, agencies and other major stakeholders involved in delivering a framework for developing the tourism industry, is evidenced by the list of contributors to the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism's *New Horizons for Irish Tourism, An Agenda for Action*. They include the Departments of Transport, Finance, Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, and Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, the Marine Institute, Waterways Ireland, the Dublin Airport Authority, Aer Lingus, Ryanair, the Commissioner for Aviation Regulation, Irish Ferries, and Dublin Port.

### **The Business of Tourism in County Mayo**

*The National Development Plan, 2007-2013* (NDP) is in essence a national framework within which government departments, regional development agencies and local authorities each have an important role to play. In terms of the development of tourism, and tourism products within County Mayo, the principal agencies for implementing the specific objectives set out in the NDP and *New Horizons for Irish Tourism: An Agenda for Action*, are, Ireland West Tourism (operating as the regional agent for Fáilte Ireland), and the Mayo County Development Board (under the auspices of Mayo County Council). In addition there are numerous small community-led initiatives which contributed to the Tourism Policy Review Group and which, in themselves, are pro-active in promoting tourism as a community-led initiative. Foremost amongst these is the Westport Tourism Organisation, which has successfully promoted Westport as an attractive tourist destination and the acknowledged 'Honey Pot' destination in the county.

The Mayo County Development Board was established in March 2000 to develop and implement an integrated development plan for the county with short, medium and long term objectives reaching out to 2012.<sup>9</sup> The plan covers all aspects of social, industrial and commercial activity in the county. Whilst recognising at the outset that tourism is one of the most important industries in Mayo, the plan itself is generally non-specific in how the

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<sup>9</sup> Mayo County Development Board, *op. cit.*



tourism product is to be developed and in fact tourism only merits one paragraph in the main body of the report

Tourism is one of the most important industries in Mayo...with an estimated 288,000 overseas visitors to Mayo in 1999, which was worth an estimated €166m to the local economy...There is a good quality tourism product based around the quality natural environment, and activity holidays such as angling, golfing, festivals and leisure.<sup>10</sup>

It identifies the main challenge as a need to increase tourism spend in the county, and to develop and promote additional clusters of attractions

In reality the County Development Board has entrusted the development of tourism in Mayo to Fáilte Ireland West:

which operates on a regional basis (and) is identified as the appropriate body to advance the regional tourism development agenda, building on the work of and in co-operation with the Western Development Commission.<sup>11</sup>

In this role Fáilte Ireland West made a number of submissions to the Tourism Action Implementation Group when that body was completing its 2006 report to the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism.<sup>12</sup> These submissions supported by the Mayo County Development Board present a framework for diverse tourism activities in which there is an opportunity for the development of genealogy research as an integrated part of the county's tourism product mix. The submissions include the development of Mayo Naturally as a key player in developing and promoting Mayo's tourism product. Mayo Naturally is a marketing and promotional company financed by Mayo County Council and managed and operated by Ireland West Tourism from its main office in Westport. Its main function is to promote Mayo tourism via advertising and marketing initiatives, including radio and television advertising, and promotional events including familiarisation trips for overseas tourism journalists, particularly from North America.

Other submissions, which presented favourable opportunities for developing genealogy tourism, included the provision of all-weather facilities and activities, identification of potential growth areas, sectors and clusters through the Local Spatial Strategy process, and the broadening of the range of available attractions to assist in increasing the average duration of stay. In particular, the submissions recommended developing a strategy to maintain a wide range of historical, cultural and folklore records and archives relevant to County Mayo, a specific activity to which the family history

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p. 22

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism, *op. cit.*

research centres could, in conjunction with the county library service, make a central contribution.

One notable omission from the numerous regional and national plans and strategies which has emerged during the past two to three years has been the exclusion of genealogy research from the *County Mayo Heritage Plan 2005-2010*. This plan, initiated by the Heritage Council in association with Mayo County Council, is intended to be an all inclusive document which

gives us a sense of identity, enriches our lives and enhances our everyday existence. In addition to its intrinsic value, educational and cultural benefits, it is of enormous economic value, underpinning Mayo's vitally important tourist industry.<sup>13</sup>

At the time of writing it is still not clear why genealogy research has been omitted from the plan. Under the provisions of the Heritage Act, 1995, the functions of the Heritage Council are defined as proposing policies for the

identification, protection, preservation and enhancement of national heritage, including heritage objects...Part 1, Section 2 of the Act defines heritage objects as 'objects over 25 years old which are works of art or industry (including books, documents and other records, including genealogical records) of cultural interest'.

The public consultation process, in preparing the plan, included such diverse organisations as The National Museum of Ireland-Country Life, Michael Davitt Museum, Museums of Mayo Network, Department of Irish Folklore, The Quiet Man Heritage Centre, Cong, The Westport Historical Society and other organisations aligned more to the history of the county than its biodiversity. However, as stated in the introduction to the Plan:

The publication of the County Mayo Heritage Plan represents a beginning, not an end. The plan seeks to build on and compliment the work of many different agencies, organisations, communities, groups and individuals currently being undertaken in the county.<sup>14</sup>

Against that background it would be potentially beneficial, for the North and South Mayo Family History Societies to make representations to the County Mayo Heritage Forum, to be included in the overall scope of the plan, particularly in the light of the developments of closer ties with the county library, discussed later in the chapter.

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<sup>13</sup> Mayo County Council, *County Mayo Draft Heritage Plan 2005-2010*, (Mayo County Council, Castlebar, 2005), p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

### Principal Historical, Cultural and Heritage Attractions in County Mayo.

As illustrated in Figure 6.17, the ownership, management and development of visitor attractions within County Mayo remain principally within the private sector and operated by small to medium enterprises (SMEs). Many of these enterprises are partially subsidised by various forms of state support including marketing and promotion grants from Fáilte Ireland, European grants via the LEADER initiative, FÁS, POBAL, and in some cases direct assistance from development agency grants.

LOCATION	ORGANISATION	DESIGNATION
Achill Sound	Cois Abhainn	Private
Ballina	Mayo North Heritage Centre Research Centre	Voluntary
Castlebar	National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Country Life	National body
Cong	Quiet Man Heritage Cottage	Private
Foxford	Foxford Woollen Mills Visitor Centre	Co-Op/ Community body
Straide	The Michael Davitt Museum	Private
Kilasser	Hennigan Heritage Farm	Private
Kiltimagh	Kiltimagh Museum	Voluntary body
Knock	Knock Folk Museum	Independent/ Charitable Trust
Clew Bay Heritage Centre	Westport	Voluntary Body

**Figure 6.17 Heritage Council List of Museums and Collections in County Mayo based organisations in Ireland, 2002**

Source: Heritage Council

Many are seasonal in nature and thus promotion of year-round tourism within the county, is limited and tends to centre on the main tourist urban areas, particularly Westport, which has successfully promoted itself via the Westport Tourism Organisation. Nonetheless, there are a number of high quality visitor attractions detailed below which are well managed and presented and have the potential to complement a packaged genealogy tourism product combining research with the physical evidence of Mayo's history and heritage.

#### *The Museum of Country Life, Turlough,*

The museum is part of the National Museum of Ireland and is based in a purpose-built new facility in the grounds of Turlough House, located some 8 km outside Castlebar off

the main N5 Sligo road in the village of Turlough (Figure 6.18). The museum, built over four floors, exhibits a collection of artefacts which tell the story of Irish country life between 1850 and 1950, a period which substantially covers the main periods of Irish emigration. The exhibits cover a comprehensive collection of artefacts connected with agriculture, fishing, hunting, clothing, textiles, furniture, trades, crafts, transport, calendar customs, leisure and religion.

The exhibits also include many audio-visual representations of country crafts including weaving, spinning, basket making and the working practices of the blacksmith. Of particular interest to visiting groups are the extensive programme of lectures and 'hands-on' art and craft programmes. Researchers of history and folklore may access the museum's Archive of Country Life. This consists of more than 2000 books, 1200 journals, 600 boxes of paper resources, 35,000 images, 1000 prints, architectural drawings and a video collection. See example in (Figure 6.19). Genealogy researchers visiting this museum as part of a genealogy-based package tour could supplement their research findings by including in their work a catalogue of some of the images and other details of Irish rural life which would have been familiar to many of their ancestors. The museum has been built to a world class standard and includes free car and coach parking, shop and café, guided tours and total wheel chair access. It is open all year round from Tuesday through to Sunday.



**Figure 6.18 Turlough House, Museum of Country Life**

**Photo: John Towler**



**Figure 6.19 The Rear View Balancing Act, Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Transport in the West**  
**Source: National Museum of Ireland**

### *Hennigan's Heritage Farm*

The farm is located 20 kilometres from the Museum of Country Life off the N26-Swinford to Ballina Road. The owner, Tom Hennigan, presents a unique insight into family life in rural County Mayo (Figure 6.20). The visitor is taken on a guided tour of the Hennigan family home and via stories, tales and demonstrations learns how his family survived on less than 10 acres of poor land for over 200 years. Although the family now lives in an adjacent modern house, Tom Hennigan has preserved the original family homestead and surrounding land whilst at the same time building on modern visitor facilities which includes accommodation for the local community to use for a variety of social events and special occasions such as weddings, meetings and conferences.

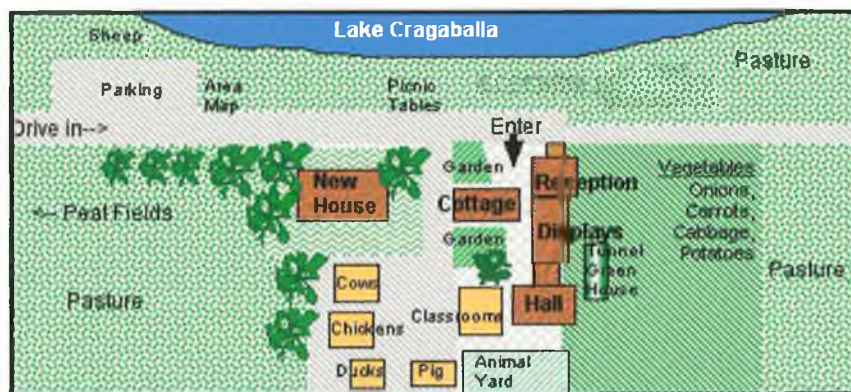
As well as a tea room where visitors may enjoy a variety of farm produce including home made cakes and jam, visitors may wander freely around the property and gardens. Hennigan's Heritage Farm is a perfect counterpoint to the Museum of Country Life in that Tom Hennigan puts 'flesh on the bones' of Irish rural country life via a unique and stimulating personal presentation. As well as presenting a personal account of the nature of rural life, Tom Hennigan also possesses a detailed knowledge of the families who have lived and farmed in the area. He welcomes questions, particularly from visitors tracing their family roots



**Figure 6.20 Tom Hennigan Demonstrating the Art of Shoemaking**

**Photo: John Towler**

The farm is open from March until September and special tours and activities can be arranged for groups. This facility would be of particular interest to organisers of genealogy tourism packages where the timing of the visit and the presentation could be tailored to meet any specific requirements.



**Figure 6.21 Schematic Layout of Hennigans Heritage Farm**

**Source: Heritage Council**

### *The Michael Davitt Museum*

Moving North from Hennigan's Heritage Farm, the Michael Davitt Museum is situated on the N58 between the town of Castlebar and Ballina in the picturesque village of Straide. During the late 1870s, bad weather, poor crops and declining cattle prices produced an agrarian crisis in Mayo which left the people heavily in debt and unable to pay their rents.





**Figure 6.22 Bronze Statue of Michael Davitt, Straide**

**Photo: John Towler**

The crop failures revived memories of the Great Famine and resulted in a spontaneous mass protest that was channelled, under the leadership of James Daly (1838-1911) and Michael Davitt (1846-1906), into the formation of the Land League in 1879. An historic meeting at Daly's Hotel on the Mall in Castlebar took place on 16 August 1879 and the Mayo Land League was established. In October 1879 Davitt established the National Land League of Ireland and invited Charles Stewart Parnell to be its president.



**Figure 6.23 Michael Davitt Museum, Straide**

**Photo: John Towler**

On his death in Dublin in 1906, 20,000 people filed past his coffin before it was brought by train to Foxford. He was buried in Straide Abbey. The museum (Figure 6.23) is housed in the pre-penal church where Michael Davitt was christened in 1846 and is

close to the 13<sup>th</sup> century Straide Abbey. The museum houses an extensive collection of documents, photos, Land Acts, letters, postcards and other items connected to his work to change the systems of land ownership and tenure which had been the cause of so much unrest and social upheaval during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

There is a research facility attached to the museum with access to the extensive archive, much of which is now digitised. This facility would be particularly useful to genealogy researchers whose ancestors would have lived during this period. The museum also presents an audio-visual presentation of Michaels Davitt's life and times and guided tours of the museum, graveyard and Straide Abbey. It is open all year round.

### *Knock Museum*

The Museum is situated east of the Michael Davitt Museum on the N17 mid-way between Galway and Sligo. The museum is located within the grounds of Knock Shrine. The Knock Shrine commemorates the appearance of an apparition of Our Lady, St. Joseph and St. John the Evangelist at the South gable of Knock Parish Church on 21 August 1879. It became famous for being a place with curative properties,



**Figure 6.24 Section of Display Area: Knock Folk Museum**

**Photo: John Towler**

Since then it has grown into a major international place of pilgrimage and the existence of the Marian shrine was the primary reason behind the building of Knock International Airport some 17 kilometres from the town. The new weekly service from New York/Boston to Knock International presents a major opportunity for targeting tourists



from the US East coast, and is particularly important for genealogy tourism into Mayo as so many Mayo people emigrated in the past to the eastern coast of America.

The museum itself although focussing on the story of the apparition, nonetheless places it in the context of village life at the time, and exhibits a range of contemporary artefacts associated with fishing and agriculture. It includes a typical national school room and an inspector's report covering the period 1891-1901 – a date range which would be of interest to third generation descendants of emigrants from that time span.

### *The Kiltimagh Museum*

Another location which provides a fascinating link to the past and a departure point for many emigrants in the early to middle 20<sup>th</sup> century is the former Kiltimagh railway station in the village of Kiltimagh, situated halfway between Claremorris and Swinford. It was formerly an important stopover on the Limerick to Sligo line (Figure 6.25).



**Figure 6.25 Kiltimagh Museum, County Mayo**

**Photo: John Towler**

The museum which is open from June to September provides further insights into the life and times of people living in rural County Mayo. The arrival of the railway in 1894 enabled this part of rural County Mayo to ‘catch up’ with the outside world – bringing in mail, newspapers, cattle, and other goods. It later served to carry away emigrants. The station closed for business in 1984 and the buildings would have become derelict but for the efforts of the local community, who acquired the old goods store in the late 1980s, and turned it into a museum. They also acquired two old railway carriages to

commemorate the thousands of people who emigrated from the area. Over time the museum has acquired many artefacts providing a link to the past including the Land League Banner buried for safe keeping in a bog for 40 years. The museum also celebrates many local emigrants who went on to become famous worldwide including Mike Hogarty, who supervised the first Apollo moon landing, and Gene Tunney, former World Heavyweight Boxing Champion.

### *The Quiet Man Cottage Museum*

A museum of a different type can be found in South Mayo (Figure 6.26). It is an exact replica of 'White-O'-Mornin', the cottage that featured in the 1951 film *The Quiet Man* starring John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara. This iconic film presented a Hollywood version of an idyllic rural Ireland which acted as a catalyst for the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century upsurge in descendants of Irish emigrants seeking to trace their roots.



**Figure 6.26 The Quiet Man' Cottage, Cong, County Mayo**

**Photo: John Towler**

The museum is situated in the village of Cong where much of the filming took place. The ground floor is furnished with faithful reproductions of the furniture and artefacts depicted in the film (which were the cherished possessions of Maureen O'Hara's character 'Mary Kate'). Although the film itself depicted a mythological Irish rural community, John Ford, the director, took considerable pains to ensure that the cottage and

other backdrops faithfully reproduced a typical 1920s Irish vernacular cottage. It is therefore of considerable interest not only to 'Quiet Man' fans but also to visitors whose ancestors would have lived in very similar houses.

#### *Clew Bay Heritage Centre*

Clew Bay Heritage Centre focuses on the history of Westport as a fine example of the so called 'planned town' developed by the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy during the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As well as displaying an extensive collection of photographs, documents and artefacts connected to Westport and its surrounding area, the centre conducts guided tours of the town for groups of visitors. The centre is an important destination for 'Genealogy Tourists' in that, although not a member of the Irish Family History Foundation, it contains an extensive database of genealogical records of the Clew Bay and Westport area – which includes Achill Island, Clare Island and Louisborough, areas which saw considerable emigration during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The voluntary staff have been compiling genealogical data for over 20 years and have access to local records unique to Westport and its environs.

#### *Enniscoe Museum*

The museum, part of the North Mayo Family Research Centre, is situated in the grounds of Enniscoe House, a listed Georgian House on the shores of Lough Conn. The museum contains many agricultural, industrial and domestic artefacts from the 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and also holds demonstrations of traditional crafts including a working forge. Although visiting 'genealogy tourists' cannot have direct access to the records, the staff do take time out to deal with enquiries and many can have a positive result by the time they have explored the museum and gardens and visited the tearooms. Alternatively the visitor can complete a form with the details of their relatives and a full search document will be forwarded to their home address

#### *The Céide Fields Visitor Centre*

In North West Mayo, on the Erris peninsula, a heritage centre of a different type exists, which interprets not the relatively recent history of the locality and the role that its inhabitants played in the social upheavals of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but that of a community which lived some 5000 years ago. The Céide Fields, near Ballycastle, are the oldest known Neolithic field systems in the world. First discovered in the 1930s by turf cutters, they were reported to the National Museum by the local national school teacher

Patrick Caulfield, and subsequently excavated by his son Séamus in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Built in the form and shape of a pyramid (Figure 6.27), it features an indoor exhibition which places the field system in context with examples of more famous world heritage sites such as the Great Pyramid (which it pre-dates). An audio-visual presentation explains the emergence and subsequent decline of this community as blanket bog covered the site. Visitors can also follow an outdoor guided tour of the site. The parallels of struggle for survival and subsequent failure, between this community and their 19<sup>th</sup> century successors, make it a worthwhile inclusion on any culture and heritage tour of County Mayo.



**Figure 6.27 Front Entrance to Céide Fields Visitor Centre, Ballycastle, County Mayo**

**Photo: John Towler**

### *Croagh Patrick Information Centre*

Another site of immense cultural importance to the county is the mountain of Croagh Patrick and the adjoining information centre, situated off the R335 half way between Westport and Louisborough, in the village of Murrisk. Croagh Patrick is believed to be the mountain upon which St. Patrick fasted for 40 days in 441 AD. On Reek Sunday, the last Sunday in July, pilgrims come from Ireland and all over the world, to climb the mountain in the steps of St. Patrick and to celebrate on the summit by the 19<sup>th</sup> century oratory (Figure 6.28).

Recent excavation has revealed the foundations of a dry stone oratory similar to that of the Gallarus Oratory in County Kerry. The site has been carbon dated to 430-890 AD, pointing to a long history of Christian occupation. Close by is a (possibly) iron age



hillfort suggesting that the mountain had a special significance for the inhabitants back into pre-Christian times. The climb to the top is quite arduous and probably not suitable for visitors with health or mobility problems, but the Croagh Patrick Information Centre, situated at the base of the mountain, provides extensive information on the background and history of the mountain.



**Figure 6.28 The Summit of Croagh Patrick Showing the 1905 Oratory and Hillfort**

**Source: The Heritage Council**

Near to the centre, and of great significance to returning descendants of emigrants, is the Famine Monument sculpted by John Behan and unveiled by President Mary Robinson in 1997. The sculpture represents one of the so called ‘Coffin Ships’ in which so many emigrants perished in the voyage to America (Figure 6.29).



**Figure 29 The Famine Monument, Murrisk, County Mayo**

**Photo John Towler**

The above survey and descriptions cover the principal locations of County Mayo's historical and cultural heritage but, the list is by no means exhaustive, and there are numerous small museums and exhibitions located throughout the county which may be visited by 'Genealogy Tourist'. There are also many other locations in the neighbouring counties of Galway and Roscommon which are worthy of inclusion in any planned cultural and historical tour of the area by 'Genealogy Tourists' or groups. Of particular merit is the Famine Museum at Strokestown in County Roscommon. The museum is located in the former stables of Strokestown Park House, one of the best examples of a Palladian style house left intact in Ireland. The exhibits are centred on the estate papers of the Mahon Family discovered in the estate office of the house by the present owner. The papers, which dealt with the administration of the estate during the Famine, contain many pleas from the destitute tenants of the estate and describe how they were dealt with. The museum is twinned with Grosse Île, Quebec, the receiving station for emigrants landing there during the Famine years and another important source of documentation for anybody tracing their family history whose ancestors may have initially made landfall in Canada.

### **Marketing Genealogy as part of a Cultural Tourism Product Mix**

The major changes in world tourism patterns generated by the social, economic and political upheavals of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have caused tourism bodies such as Tourism Ireland to re-evaluate the way in which Ireland's tourism potential is presented, so as to ensure as far as it is possible, that new marketing and promotional initiatives are hitting the right targets. To assist in an understanding of where the promotion of genealogy tourism might fit into these new marketing initiatives, the background to marketing genealogy as a recognisable tourism opportunity is briefly reviewed. From the early 1980s, genealogy research, or the tracing of ancestors who had emigrated from the island of Ireland during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, by third and fourth generation successors of people of Irish descent, had been recognised as a distinctive type of tourism activity. It had been tracked and evaluated by various tourism authorities, Fáilte Ireland (formerly Bord Fáilte), The Northern Irish Tourist Board and other regional agencies, alongside other perceived 'niche market' pursuits such as fishing, golf, horse riding, walking, scenic tours, lake and river cruising and cultural activities such as music and arts festivals. However what differentiated genealogy tourism in the

past from the other activities mentioned above, was that while state and other capital and revenue funding has been readily available to promote those activities with significant heavyweight promotions in magazines, on radio and television and via national and international trade fairs, by contrast, marketing support to promote genealogy tourism, had been practically non-existent.

Although receiving official recognition in 1989 with the establishment of the Irish Genealogy Project by the then Taoiseach, Charles Haughey, tangible support for genealogy was concentrated on the establishment of a Central Record Index with the intention of consolidating the work already being undertaken by the nationwide network of Family History Societies. The development and progress of this initiative, dealt with comprehensively in Chapter Four, involved a multitude of state agencies and government departments including key tourism bodies such as Bord Fáilte and Shannon Development working through a 'quango', Irish Genealogy Limited (IGL). The primary task of IGL was the establishment and completion of a National Signposting Index system which could be accessed via the Internet and allow users to locate the Family History Centre most likely to have records and other material relevant to their search. What it clearly did not do, nor for that matter did it have a mandate to do, was to have the dual role of marketing the product to the estimated 70 million descendants of emigrants to North America, The Antipodes, the United Kingdom and other less prominent centres of Irish emigration such as Argentina. This absence of marketing activity also excluded any detailed analysis of the profile of 'Genealogy Tourists' other than being associated with the Irish Diaspora. Their needs and expectations, particularly those associated with 'the voyage of discovery' associated with personal research of source documents appear to have been totally ignored. However, despite this almost complete lack of pro-active marketing by state and other agencies, the number of overseas visitors coming to Ireland seeking their roots, particularly from the United States, continued to grow during the 1990s, reaching an estimated high of 108,000 by 2000.

The downturn in the overseas tourism market after 2001, triggered by the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York affected all sectors of the Irish tourist industry including genealogy tourism which has also suffered from the additional impact of the rise in Internet research. Although overall numbers of visitors to Ireland have recovered since, many of the traditional tourist activity markets, such as, fishing, walking and horse riding have not. Tourism Ireland's latest research suggests that the failure to recover in these areas is due in part to a change in the profile of tourists visiting Ireland,

where an ageing population, particularly from North America, are forgoing activity holidays such as golf, fishing, cycling and walking, with demand for these activities being replaced by a greater demand for sightseeing tours, cultural activities, guided tours and cruises.<sup>15</sup>

In response to these changes Tourism Ireland has developed a new strategy to develop cultural tourism from what has been seen as a niche product targeted specifically at cultural tourists to a mainstream product with considerable overlaps with the catch-all definition of general tourism. To provide focus to this strategic re-alignment it has adopted the following definition of cultural tourism:

Cultural Tourism embraces the full range of experiences visitors can undertake to learn what makes a destination distinctive – its lifestyle, its heritage, its arts, its people – and the business of providing and interpreting that culture to visitors.<sup>16</sup>

The strategy also divides cultural tourists into three broad segments reflecting their different levels of commitment to culture, ‘Motivated’, ‘Inspired’ or ‘Incidental’. ‘Motivated Cultural Tourists’ are seen as having a specialist interest in one main cultural area, genealogy, architecture, or music festivals – whereas ‘Inspired Cultural Tourists’ have a broad interest in culture and sightseeing driven by the cultural opportunities associated with the destination. ‘Incidental Cultural Tourists’ have a primary reason for their trip but will participate in other cultural activities that are associated with their itinerary or travel plans. It would be worthwhile, when planning any future marketing initiative to encourage genealogy tourism that attention be given to identifying this latter group as possible targets for including family history research in their holiday plans.

The strategy also identifies other characteristics which fit the profile of ‘Genealogy Tourists’ in that holidays have become time to spend time on hobbies and interests, and to experience culture, rather than sightseeing, through learning, interacting and doing, rather than passively observing the formal presentation of a culture. As part of the strategic review, an audit of products (locations) that are relevant to delivering cultural tourism in Ireland was undertaken which identified 4,800 individual products, delivered by seven identified categories – including, under genealogy, the Irish Family History Centres based in the Republic and in Northern Ireland.

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<sup>15</sup> Tourism Ireland and Marketing Insights, *The Ageing Consumer* (Tourism Ireland, Dublin, 2004).

<sup>16</sup> Fáilte Ireland, *Cultural Tourism, Making it Work for You: A New Strategy for Cultural Tourism in Ireland* (Fáilte Ireland, Dublin, 2006), p. 1.



The product range detailed in Figure 6.30 below highlights the scope and range of the product mix for cultural tourism in which individual stakeholders, for example, the genealogy sector could package their product alongside elements selected from one or more of the other main product providers.

PROVIDERS OF IRELAND'S CULTURAL TOURISM PRODUCT	
Provider	Products
Urban Culture	346
Rural Culture	592
Heritage	648
Historic and Private Houses to visit and stay in	185
Genealogy	34
Arts and Events	1,893
Gastronomy	1,555

**Figure 6.30 Fáilte Ireland Tourism Development Strategy, 2007 – 2013**

**Source: Fáilte Ireland. National Tourism Development Authority, 2006**

The advantage of moving towards this more inclusive cultural holiday experience is that it will present a less fragmented choice for visitors or tour groups (particularly those identified as 'Incidental Tourists') trying to plan events around the primary purpose of their trip.

Equally important in terms of promotion is that apart from a very few major cultural attractions such as Bunratty Castle, Dublin Zoo and The Cliffs of Moher, the majority of the stakeholders engaged in providing the range of products highlighted in Figure 6.30, are small to medium sized operations. Their marketing budgets, if they exist at all, allow for only very basic marketing comprising brochures distributed through Fáilte Ireland's Tourist Offices and a website with links to more prominent local or regional sites. For example, Mayo North and South Family History Centre web sites can be accessed from the Mayo County Library site and Mayo on the Move, sponsored by Mayo County Council. Moreover what little additional funding has been available from Fáilte Ireland or in the case of Mayo, Fáilte Ireland West, is so diluted by the number of providers competing for funds as make each 'slice of the cake' minimally effective.

The implementation of a strategic plan for cultural tourism will dramatically change the way in which funding is made available for promotion. The strategic review

recommends that the rules for allocating cultural tourism marketing resources and funding be changed to:

Reduce allocation of marketing funding to the creation of 'phone book'-type brochures produced by individual industry participants and marketing groups and prioritise marketing support for 'experience-based' offers that bundle across activities and are consistent with short listed themes and events.<sup>17</sup>

This new strategy for the promotion of cultural tourism offers a real opportunity for the family history centres in County Mayo to form new alliances with other tourism-based centres in which competition is replaced by co-operation, which in turn could lead to more substantial support from the tourism agencies in promoting tourism within the county.

### **The Marketing Opportunity**

This change in the choice and nature of the holiday experience is particularly accounted for by identifying the 'new' tourist profile as an ageing and often retired or semi-retired visitor having flexible travel options, and seeking out physically undemanding holiday experiences centred more on experiencing the culture and natural and built heritage of a destination, a profile that is an almost perfect fit to that of the 'Genealogy Tourist' described in Chapter Five. There is therefore a window of opportunity to create and direct marketing programmes targeted at those groups which match this defined general tourism profile, but who may have an additional potential interest in incorporating some family history research as part of a cultural and heritage-based tourism experience.

The growth of genealogy tourism throughout the closing years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century occurred, against a background of confused, mostly state initiatives, which were often in conflict with the private sector stakeholders, particularly the county-based family history societies. Although Fáilte Ireland and other tourism organisations were associated with these initiatives, no comprehensive marketing of the product was undertaken on a national level, and regional marketing, mostly by individual societies, was limited by severe lack of financial resources, to the design and maintenance of websites and some local point-of-sale material. Clew Bay Heritage Centre and North Mayo Heritage Centre established local museums and other similar cultural or heritage attractions which offered visitors a more varied experience. Overall, however, the promotion of genealogy tourism as an integral part of the county's tourism product mix was largely non-existent. The current

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p. 30.

position is that there has been little or no progress in developing a proactive marketing strategy for genealogy tourism at any level, including Tourism Ireland, Fáilte Ireland West or by the family history centres.

Conversely, there have been significant developments in the provision of genealogy services in the county with the integration of the county library resources with those of the family history centres. 'Genealogy Tourists' visiting the county are now able to access most records directly and use the library resources, which include research study areas equipped with microfilm printers, photocopiers and computer terminals to search other relevant databases. These improvements to the product and the change in the profile of visitors to Ireland identified by Tourism Ireland suggests that the promotion of genealogy tourism to that grouping as part of a wider cultural holiday experience warrants further investigation.

### **Constructing a Marketing Plan**

From a marketing perspective the genealogy tourism industry in County Mayo does not have to develop, promote and fund marketing strategies designed to give it a competitive edge over other players in the market place, if the market place is deemed to be the geographical boundaries of the county. As has been demonstrated, the family history centres of North and South Mayo and Clew Bay offer a unique product within their local geographic areas and as such complement rather than compete with each other. More specifically, the North and South Mayo centres operate as a co-operative. Outside of the geographical boundaries of County Mayo, there are alternative information sources available to researchers particularly the Internet, and the success of any marketing strategy which leads to an increase in the use of the resources within the county, combined with an increase in actual tourism numbers, must therefore recognise those alternatives as potential threats

Also notwithstanding the advantages of not having competitive pressures within the geographical confines of their market place, the successful promotion of genealogy services will still depend on applying the basic principles of marketing, so as to ensure that the products and services provided by the centres are promoted to potential genealogy researchers and match as close as possible their needs and wants. These principles, when including service products, are often referred to as the Seven Ps. They include the four basics of 'Product', 'Pricing', 'Placement' and 'Promotion' as well as the additional service requirements dealing with 'People', 'Process' and 'Physical' evidence.

Applying these principles in developing a properly structured marketing plan is critically important in that it will not only contribute to the achievement of incremental business for the centres, but more importantly could be instrumental in convincing other contributors to the culture and heritage industry in County Mayo of the advantages of including genealogy tourism as part of an all inclusive heritage and cultural holiday experience within the county.

### **Current Marketing Practices**

The principal product which information providers of genealogy services offer is, as its name suggests, a service, which is largely intangible, although it may be argued that the construction of a fully researched family tree enclosed in a leather bound presentation book represents one of the tangible elements of the commodification of genealogy research. However marketing and selling an intangible service imposes a number of extra challenges to that of a tangible product where functionality can be determined in advance of any potential sale, and the product can be returned if it is judged not fit for the purpose. Providing or selling a service, however, cannot be measured by the same criteria.

Another key element in establishing the basis of a marketing plan, that of determining the price to be charged for the service, also becomes problematic when applied to genealogy research, particularly when provided by the family history centres. Clearly a 'cost plus' basis has been out of the question given the financial circumstances under which they operate. 'Prices' for services are currently fixed on an arbitrary basis having no regard to competitiveness and represent value for money only after the event, if the information proves to be accurate and therefore of use to the recipient. Monitoring feedback from customers to gauge satisfaction levels, discussed below, is a very important process when the pricing policy is so arbitrary.

'Promotion' of the services provided by the centres has been almost non-existent other than establishing links with Mayo Naturally, the advertising and promotional website for Mayo County Council and Mayo on the Move, a private advertising website.

'Placement', otherwise known as distribution, is another way of describing how a prospective customer can access a product. In the case of genealogy resources, access to information has been largely a matter of e-mailing, faxing or in some cases 'snail mailing' the centres detailing the information required. Replies, often delayed for some time have almost always been returned hardcopy by post. In some cases researchers have visited the

centres directly. The introduction of the online, pay-per-view service linked to the County Library website is a major improvement in the distribution process.

The additional basic marketing tools which apply to the provision of services, 'People', 'Process' and 'Physical' evidence, have also proved to be somewhat problematic when applied to the family history centres. In a normal service environment it is upon coming into contact with the customer and being seen to physically perform a service that the quality of the 'Product' is judged. In the case of the centres where no such contact exists this is hard to judge. Like 'Process', the way in which the service is performed, the only real judgement of the quality of the product lies in the accuracy and usefulness of the information provided. If it is satisfactory then there will be an implied acknowledgement that the person who has dealt with the enquiry has fulfilled the requirement of being well trained and well motivated.

The final basis of a marketing plan, that physical evidence exists which creates confidence in the customer about purchasing a service product, relies, in the case of the family history centres, in being able to produce tangible evidence of the quality of the information. This is best achieved by developing positive feedback from satisfied customers and being able to make that feedback available to potential new users of the service. The centres have no policy for monitoring customer feedback in respect of the quality of service provided although it would not be difficult to compile a customer satisfaction portfolio. The centres have a comprehensive filing system of replies from satisfied clients and a cursory audit of these files whilst researching this aspect of the marketing plan has produced more than sufficient evidence to support the confidence building element of the marketing plan.

The family history centres would need to consider the basic elements of a marketing plan as described above, not only to produce a product easily promoted directly to 'Genealogy Tourists', but it would also be essential to convince major tourism promoters such as Fáilte Ireland West that genealogy tourism could bring added value to any county-wide marketing plan which promotes cultural heritage tourism as an active and diverse holiday experience. Although the research outlined above by Tourism Ireland points to an increase in demand for this type of holiday experience and away from so-called 'activity holidays', this should not be taken to mean that cultural heritage tourism is a sedate alternative. Engaging in cultural tourism may involve the cultural tourist in a number of diverse activities, which during the course of a single vacation, may range from attending painting classes, learning to play traditional music, going to concerts,

visiting ancient sites and medieval monasteries, as well as attending lectures and training sessions on diverse subjects which could well include how to undertake genealogy research for beginners as well as advanced research techniques for the experienced practitioner. A genealogy tourism marketing plan for County Mayo should also take into account the need to make a connection between the quest for finding ancestral connections in the county and the need to experience the natural and built heritage of the county – which can be built into the holiday experience either as part of an organised tour or as part of an individual's personal voyage of discovery.

### **Conclusion**

Genealogy, although acknowledged as a part of the tourism product mix by Fáilte Ireland and by other tourism agencies, has nonetheless not been promoted as a tourism activity unlike golf, fishing, horse riding and other products which have featured so strongly in the past in promoting Ireland as a tourism destination. Nonetheless during the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the increase in the numbers of visitors coming to Ireland to seek out family connections, particularly from the USA, prompted government and other state agencies to respond by funding improvements to the structures and organisations which delivered the information.

However, the failure to market genealogy tourism led to a situation where product development, which recognises primarily the needs and wants of the customer, was ignored when developing new data collection systems. No persuasive evidence has emerged which recognised the fact that fundamentally important to those engaged in the voyage of discovery into family history, was the ability to access the databases and records as a personal experience. This in turn led to a growing disillusionment by 'Genealogy Tourists' which, without doubt, contributed to the downturn in American visitors which has been generally attributed to the events of the destruction of the World Trade Centre and the advent of Internet research.

In County Mayo this deficit has now been largely overcome by enabling access to the County Library and family history research centre resources and using research facilities such as photocopiers, microfiche readers and computer terminals located in the Mayo County Library branch network.

Overall, feedback from the primary research undertaken as part of this study confirms that 'Genealogy Tourists' share an interest in the culture, heritage and history of County Mayo, alongside the 'General Tourist' population – the former often seeking to connect

their personal voyage of discovery with that of the physical links to the past (as represented by the extensive range of heritage-based visitor attractions). Genealogy has long been recognised as a 'pull factor' that can attract tourists and revenue to a destination. The need to modernise, respond to change and develop a more flexible and researcher-friendly environment which meets the needs of 'Genealogy Tourists' is vital if the genealogy tourism industry in Mayo and the rest of Ireland is to survive into the future. So too is the need to take heed of the fact that tourists also visit Ireland for sentimental/ethnic reasons and eagerly look for more broadly-based experiences of heritage and culture.

# **CHAPTER SEVEN**

## **Conclusion**



## Conclusion

Whilst the term 'genealogy' may be defined as the study and investigation of lines of descent, genealogy research during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been more concerned with 'family history research', which encompasses more than just the construction of linear lines of descent. It has been demonstrated that the practice of establishing a proven lineage was from the earliest times necessary to legitimise power and authority, and later to establish proof of ownership, particularly during times of social turmoil and political unrest, which arguably has been the norm throughout the island of Ireland for much of its history. This practice, however, was confined almost without exception to those with power, privilege and wealth, and by definition to a very small minority (which for much of the 300 years leading up to the creation of the Free State in 1922, were of Protestant descent). Furthermore the majority of the landless disenfranchised political and economic refugees who emigrated during the 19<sup>th</sup> century left a scant paper trail of documentation for the late 20<sup>th</sup> century Irish Diaspora to use to re-construct family bloodlines. The documentary evidence remaining consists principally of church and state records, which for the most part offer up little information beyond the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The interest in family history of respondents to the interviews and focus groups in this study has not been focused on establishing the rights of ownership to the family homestead or farms of land despite the apocryphal tales of bachelor farmers hiding in the hills on learning of the arrival of their first cousins from America. They are in the main ordinary men and women who have a genuine interest in discovering the identities not just of their immediate forbears who are long dead, but also of living family members, no matter how far out on the 'limb' of the family tree they may be. The motives to make this 'voyage of discovery' are not just fuelled by a form of curiosity about the past. The respondents have spoken of the need to connect with their extended families in order to learn more about themselves, who they are, and what characteristics may have formed their thinking, attitudes and prejudices.

In the absence of a detailed written genealogical portrayal of their ancestral lineage, they connect instead to the cultural landscapes and folk traditions that their ancestors left behind. They also connect with the hospitality still to be found in many parts of Ireland, particularly in the rural West in counties like Mayo. The reasons behind the phenomenal increase in these activities in the last third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been attributed in part to

a combination of significant social, economic and demographic changes in Western society. These changes occurred concurrently with the emergence of a new generation sufficiently removed from the past as to be proud rather than ashamed of the achievements of their ancestors. Some elderly American respondents to the genealogy tourism survey have spoken of the reticence of their grandparents to talk of their life in Ireland before emigrating and of their experiences in building a new life in a new country. Thus they grew up with little sense of Irish culture, history and heritage, seeing only the 'Americanised' version vividly portrayed in the St. Patrick's Day parades of New York, Boston and other Irish-American centres. The growing numbers of family history societies provided the basis for members with varying abilities to acquire the requisite techniques and skills to conduct the intellectual and academic work associated with family history research. Greater affluence and more leisure time meant that research became upgraded from a pastime to a serious hobby as cheap air travel opened up the opportunities to conduct research in Ireland as well as at home, thus heralding the arrival of what came to be known in Ireland as 'genealogy tourism'.

The other important change, which took genealogy from being a specifically academic pursuit to a popular pastime, was not only the opening up of records in local and national libraries, national archives and other institutions, but also advances in technology which made research more accessible. The advent of microfiche readers and microfilm took the information off the shelves and in many cases out of storage vaults allowing for faster access to information. When these records eventually became available on the Internet from the late 1990s, family history research became a global phenomena. But the Internet proved to be something of a two-edged sword for the genealogy tourism industry in Ireland as perceptions grew that research could now be done without expensive and time-consuming research trips.

The arrival of the 'Genealogy Tourist' in the late 1970s took the genealogy and tourism industries somewhat by surprise. There was no organised infrastructure to deal with enquiries. Family history centres gathering church and other local records were very few in number and working in isolation from each other as were professional genealogists. Records held in libraries and archival institutions were still mostly available only in hard copy and some institutions such as the General Records Office did not allow general access to their registers. These disparate parts of the genealogy industry did not begin to coalesce until the late 1980s when the then Taoiseach, Charles Haughey, seeing the possibilities of developing genealogy as an all-Ireland initiative, set up the Irish

Genealogy Project, which was later to be managed by the semi state company, Irish Genealogy Limited. The main intent of this project was to pull all the participating stakeholders and interest groups together under one umbrella, to construct a web-based central 'Signposting' index of regionally located databases and to market genealogy as an important element of Ireland's tourism product mix.

A major element was the computerisation of some 29 million church records by the IFHF. The task proved to be impossible to meet within the original timetable of eight years from 1991, and in fact has yet to be completed at the time of writing. Moreover, as the project developed, serious differences between the executive of IGL and the board members of the IFHF resulted in the IFHF withdrawing from the project in 2003. This state of affairs, together with unfavourable reports from the Comptroller and Auditor General's Office, effectively ended any ambitions to establish a centrally co-ordinated and marketed genealogy tourism product, thus leaving the county-based organisations to develop and market themselves as separate units.

Fáilte Ireland's published statistics during the late 1990s and early 2000s point to a large decline in numbers – particularly post 9/11. The impact of the Internet on the drop in numbers cannot be understated. Despite the decline in the number of 'Genealogy Tourists' visiting Ireland, little evidence has emerged during the course of this research of any co-ordinated marketing strategy to promote genealogy tourism or to even conduct customer surveys to determine needs and expectations. Private surveys, particularly the TIARA submissions to the Heritage Council (which highlighted the serious lack of research facilities available to 'Genealogy Tourists') were largely ignored. This is disappointing, particularly in light of the fact that the experience of 'personal discovery' is central to the overall package of a visit to Ireland by a 'Genealogy Tourist'.

For the future, special attention has to be paid to the notion that tourism in the new Europe "needs to be managed with foresight, proactively rather than retrospectively responding to change".<sup>1</sup> Irish genealogy needs to be actively promoted as an innovative tourism product. The increase in genealogy tourism numbers in the 1980s and 1990s was due more to serendipity than to a professionally managed marketing strategy, and although the recent impact of the Internet cannot be underestimated, Irish tourism

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<sup>1</sup> D. Hall, M. Smith, B. Marciszewska, "Introduction", in D. Hall, M. Smith, M. and B. Marciszewska (Eds.), *Tourism in the New Europe: The Challenges and Opportunities of EU Enlargement* (CABI, Wallingford, 2006), p. 13.

authorities and the genealogy industry itself needs to urgently recognise and deal with the demonstrable inadequacies inherent in the product at present.

## **APPENDICES**

**Appendix i. Hard Copy Questionnaire.**

**County Mayo Genealogy Tourism Visitor Survey, 2006**



**Q9 – Where in Co. Mayo are you staying?**

**Please give details of your location:**

- Hotel (Name: .....)
- B&B
- Self-catering
- Hostel
- Caravan & camping
- Staying with family/friends

**Q10 – How long are you staying in Co. Mayo?**

- One day
- One weekend
- One week
- Two weeks
- Three or more weeks
- Other
- Please specify:.....

**Q11 – What is your budget for this visit to Ireland? Please tick the appropriate line.**

	Less than €1,000	€1,000 – €2,000	More than €2, 000
Alone			
With family/partner/friend(s)			
With an organised group			

**Q12 – How expensive have you found the following? Please tick the appropriate line.**

	Inexpensive	Value for money	Very expensive
Accommodation			
Food			
Transport			
Retailing			
Bars & pubs			
Admission charges to museums, performances, etc.			

**Q13 – How far did your trip meet your expectations? Please tick the appropriate line.**

	Very good	Good	Poor
Scenery			
Hospitality			
Social life			
Pricing			
Variety of activities			

**Q14 – How important is the experience of Irish culture for you (e.g. going to music, dance, theatre performances)?**

- Very important
- Important
- Not important

**Q15 – How important is the experience of Irish heritage for your (e.g. visiting national parks, ancient monuments, archaeological sites, castles; learning about folklore, mythology, language)?**

- Very important
- Important
- Not important

**Q16 – Are you interested in genealogy (family history research)?**

- Yes
- No



**Q17 – Are you interested in finding out more about genealogy?**

- Very interested
- Interested
- Not interested

**Q18 – What aspects of genealogical research are you interested in?**

- Constructing family trees  Attending conferences/study tours
- Attending family/clan gatherings  Other
- Visiting ancestral homes/land plots  Please give details: .....

**Q19 – On this visit to Ireland, what have you enjoyed most and why?**

.....

.....

**Q20 – On this visit to Ireland, what have you enjoyed least and why?**

.....

.....

<b>PART C – INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH</b>
--------------------------------------------------------------

**Q21 – How would you describe yourself?**

- Overseas genealogy tourist
- Overseas professional genealogist
- A person living in Ireland doing genealogical research
- Professional genealogist living in Ireland

**Q22 – Have you undertaken genealogical research in the past?**

- Yes
- No

**Q23 – What results has this genealogical research brought?**

- Satisfactory  Why? .....
- Partially satisfactory  Why? .....
- Unsatisfactory  Why? .....

**Q24 – Are you a member of a genealogical/historical society/organisation?**

- Yes  Which one(s)? .....
- No

**Q25 – Which of the following records have you been researching and which methods and/or activities have you been utilising?**

- Civil records  Personal communication
  - Church records  Phone books
  - Census records  Graveyard headstones
  - Tithe Applotment Books  Family archives/memorabilia
  - Griffith's Valuation  Military service records
  - Register of Land Deeds  Other sources
- Please give details:** .....
- .....
- .....

**Q26 – Where have you been doing genealogical research?**

- General Register Office
- Registry of Deeds
- National Library
- National Archives
- Family History Centre  Which one? .....
- Local library  Which one? .....
- University library  Which one? .....
- Other  Which one? .....

**Q27 – Have you used the Internet when doing genealogical research?**

- Yes
- No

**Q28 – Which of the following have you bought in relation to your genealogical research?**

- Books  Which ones? .....
- Gifts/souvenirs  Which ones? .....
- Videos/DVDs/CDs/CD-ROMs  Which ones? .....

**Q29 – Would you like to visit the area where your ancestors once lived?**

- Yes
- No

**Q30 – What would improve your experience when doing your genealogical research?**

.....

.....

**Q31 – What advice would you give to others when doing their genealogical research?**

.....

.....

**Q32 – How can we better promote genealogy tourism?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

*Thank you very much for the information you provided and for your time. It is much appreciated. If you would like to share the experience of your visit to County Mayo or of your genealogical research with us in more depth over the phone or e-mail, please leave your contact details below.*

**NAME:** .....

**TEL:** .....

**E-MAIL:** .....

**Appendix ii. Electronic Questionnaire.  
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology  
2006 On-Line Survey of Genealogy Tourists  
and Researchers to Ireland**

## ELECTRONIC QUESTIONNAIRE

### Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology On-Line Survey of Genealogy Tourists and Researchers in Ireland

---

*Hello,*

*You are invited to participate in Galway-Mayo Institute of Technologies 2006 On-Line Survey of Genealogy Tourists and Researchers interested in Ireland. The survey asks questions about where you are from, your holiday preferences and some information connected with genealogy research. It will take approximately 5 minutes to complete the questionnaire.*

*Your survey responses will be strictly confidential and data from this research will be reported only in the aggregate. However, if you have any questions about the survey or wish to add any comment, you may contact John Towler. [Hyperlink to Email]*

*Thank you very much for your time and support. Please click Start Survey [Hyperlink to Questions]*

*If you want to learn more about the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology click on [www.gmit.ie](http://www.gmit.ie)*

---

Q.1. What is your country of origin?

[Drop down menu]

Q.2. Are you a member of a Genealogical or Family History Society?

Yes  No

Q.3. Have you undertaken genealogical research in your country of residence?

Yes  No

Q.4. What local information sources have you accessed in researching your family history?

Family documents  Census Returns  Church Records

Passenger Records  Others

Q.5. Have you ever used the Internet to locate data and information on your family history in your own country?

Yes  No

Q.6. Have you ever used the Internet to locate data and information on you family history in Ireland?

Yes  No

Q.7. What Internet sources based in Ireland did you access to locate information on your family history?

Direct access to data bases  Purchase from Family History Centre

Purchased from commercial agency  Purchased from professional genealogist

Q.8. How would you rate your satisfaction with the results obtained in question 7?  
[Respondents were asked to rate each selection from 1=Dissatisfied to 5=Excellent]

Q.9. Have you found relatives as a result of your search?

Yes  No

Q.10. When did you do your research?

Before 1980  1980s  1990s  After 2000

Q.11. What would you have preferred when doing your genealogy research?

Centralised records in Dublin  Decentralised records throughout Ireland

Q.12. Have you visited Ireland in the past?

Yes  No

Q.13. What were your travel arrangements?

Air-Car  Air-Rail  Air-Coach  Sea-Car  Sea-Rail  Sea-Coach

Q.14. Did you plan your vacation to research your family history?

Yes  No

Q.15. Did you visit any of the locations below as part of your research?

Family History Centre  National Library  General Register Office

National Archives  Registry of Deeds  Other

Q.16. Did you visit any of the Family History Centres listed below as part of your research?

North Mayo  South Mayo  Clew Bay

East Galway  West Galway

Q.17. How satisfied were you with your Family History Centre?

[Respondents were asked to rate each centre visited through Excellent-Good-Average-Below Average and Poor]

Q.18. How or where did you find out about your selected Family History Centre?

Genealogy Society  Genealogy Magazines  Genealogy Conference

Internet  Newspapers/Magazines  Television  Radio  Other

Q.19. How long was your stay while visiting your Family History Centre?

[Respondents were asked to tick a relevant box from one day through to three weeks]

Q.20. Where did you stay during your visit?

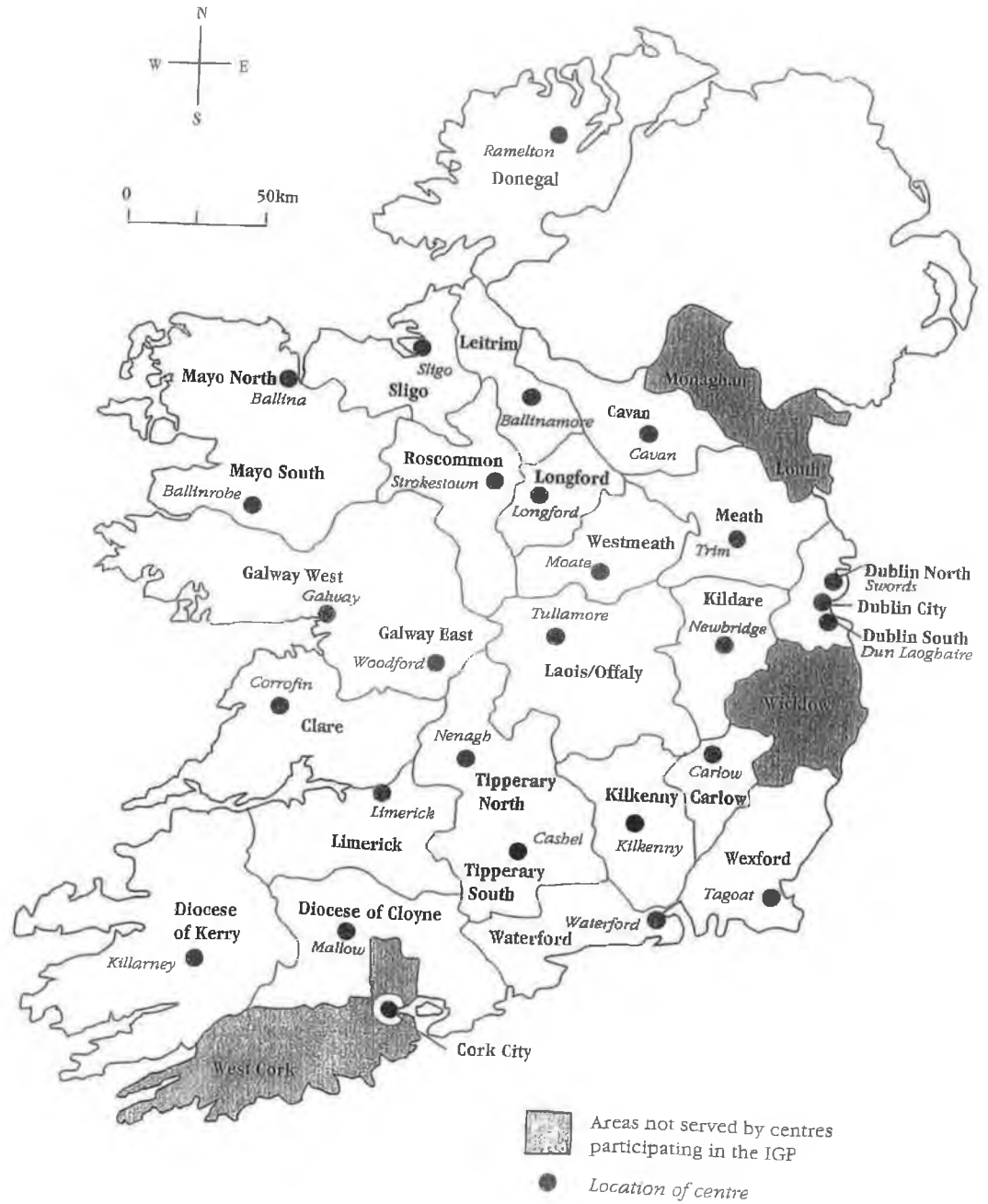
Hotel  B&B  Self Catering  Hostel  Caravan/Camping

---

*Thank you very much for fulfilling our research.*

*Your answers were successfully recorded to the database.*

**Appendix iii. Location and geographical coverage of participating Irish Family History Foundation Centres, July 1996**



Source: Comptroller and Auditor General. Report on Value for Money Examination, Department of the Taoiseach, *The Irish Genealogical Project*. (Stationery Office, Dublin, 1996), p. 13.

**Appendix iv. Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Account  
South Mayo Research Foundation Limited**



**PROFIT & LOSS ACCOUNT FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2005 TO 31st DECEMBER 2006**

	NOTES	31/12/2005 €	31/12/2004 €
Revenue		18,095	22,519
Cost of Sales		<u>0</u> 18,095	<u>0</u> 22,519
Administrative Expenses (Schedule A)		14,277	26,464
Directors Fees		0	0
Interest Receivable and Similar Income		-22	-21
Interest Payable and Similar Charges		<u>232</u>	<u>334</u>
PROFIT/(LOSS) ON ORDINARY ACTIVITIES BEFORE TAXATION	4	3,608	-4,258
TAXATION ON ORDINARY ACTIVITIES		<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
PROFIT/(LOSS) ON ORDINARY ACTIVITIES BEFORE TAXATION	5	3,608	-4,258
RETAINED PROFIT BROUGHT FORWARD AT 1ST JANUARY 2005		<u>830</u>	<u>5,088</u>
RETAINED PROFIT BROUGHT FORWARD AT 31ST DECEMBER 2005		<u><u>4,438</u></u>	<u><u>830</u></u>

WE CONFIRM THAT THESE ACCOUNTS ARE  
A TRUE COPY OF THOSE LAID BEFORE THE  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

DIRECTOR

SECRETARY

*M Masterson*

**SIGNED ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD**

*[Signature]*  
GERARD DELANEY, DIRECTOR.

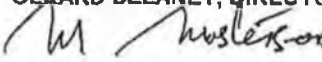
*M Masterson*  
MATTHEW MASTERSON, DIRECTOR.

**BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2005**


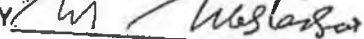
	<u>NOTES</u>	31/12/2005		31/12/2004	
		€	€	€	€
<b><u>FIXED ASSETS</u></b>					
Tangible Assets	8		52,288		56,319
<b><u>CURRENT ASSETS</u></b>					
Stock & Work in Progress	7		0		0
Debtors & Prepayments	8		930		500
Cash at Bank and in Hand			9,247		9,458
			<u>10,177</u>		<u>9,958</u>
<b><u>CREDITORS (Amounts falling due within one year)</u></b>	10		<u>1,878</u>		<u>1,903</u>
<b><u>NET CURRENT ASSETS/(LIABILITIES)</u></b>			<u>8,299</u>		<u>8,055</u>
<b><u>TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</u></b>			60,587		64,374
<b><u>CREDITORS (Amounts falling due more than one year)</u></b>	10		<u>56,149</u>		<u>63,544</u>
<b><u>TOTAL ASSETS</u></b>			<u><u>4,438</u></u>		<u><u>830</u></u>
<b><u>CAPITAL &amp; RESERVES</u></b>					
Called up Share Capital	11		0		0
Profit & Loss Account			4,438		830
			<u><u>4,438</u></u>		<u><u>830</u></u>

SIGNED BY THE BOARD:

  
GERARD DELANEY, DIRECTOR

  
MATTHEW MASTERSON, DIRECTOR.

WE CONFIRM THAT THESE ACCOUNTS ARE  
A TRUE COPY OF THOSE LAID BEFORE THE  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

DIRECTOR   
SECRETARY 

**Appendix v Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Account  
Mayo North Family Heritage Centre Limited**

**MAYO NORTH FAMILY HERITAGE CENTRE LIMITED**  
**LIMITED BY GUARANTEE**  
**PROFIT & LOSS ACCOUNT**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH. JUNE 2005**

		<u>Year Ended</u> <u>30/06/2005</u>	<u>18 month</u> <u>Period Ended</u> <u>30/06/2004</u>
	<u>NOTE</u>	€	€
Gross Income		20,182	99,040
Expenses		(27,219)	(108,896)
Depreciation	6	(16,343)	(16,343)
Amortisation of Capital Grants	10	12,118	12,118
<b>Profit/Loss before Interest</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>(11,262)</b>	<b>(14,081)</b>
Bank Interest & Charges	3	(45)	(266)
Interest Received		.	.
<b>Profit/Loss for the Financial Year</b>		<b>(11,307)</b>	<b>(14,347)</b>
Opening Revenue Reserves		24,374	38,721
<b>Closing Revenue Reserves</b>		<b>13,067</b>	<b>24,374</b>

The company had no recognised gains or losses other than the Loss for the Financial Year ended 30th. June 2005 and the Loss for the Financial 18 month period ended 30th. June 2004.

**APPROVED BY THE BOARD ON 22 April 2006**

**ON BEHALF OF THE DIRECTORS**

Director

*John G. Harvey*

Director

*P. Gunn*

LIMITED BY GUARANTEEBALANCE SHEETAS AT 30TH. JUNE 2005

	NOTE	30/06/2005 €	30/06/2004 €
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>			
Tangible Assets	6	96,897	113,240
Investment		1	1
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Cash at Bank		1,261	3,161
Cash on Hand		-	-
Debtors	7	-	4,082
Creditors (Amounts Falling Due Within One Year)	8	3,120	2,020
<b>Net Current (Liabilities)/Assets</b>		<u>(1,857)</u>	<u>5,223</u>
<b>Total Assets Less Current Liabilities</b>		<u>95,041</u>	<u>118,464</u>
<b>CAPITAL AND RESERVES</b>			
Called-Up Share Capital	1	-	-
Profit and Loss Account	12	13,067	24,372
		<u>13,067</u>	<u>24,372</u>
Long Term Loan	9	9,269	9,269
Capital Grants	10	72,705	84,823
		<u>95,041</u>	<u>118,464</u>

APPROVED BY THE BOARD ON 22 April 2006.

ON BEHALF OF THE DIRECTORS

Director

*James Gilmore*

Director

**Appendix vi. Interview with Gerry Delaney,  
South Mayo Family History Research Centre, 12 June 2006**

***How did you get started?***

“In 1985 we had a plan at that stage for people interested in genealogy to open a centre in Mayo and Galway. That was the original plan. But very quickly it emerged that there were other groups in Galway that were interested in establishing centres in Galway. So we initially set out to stick to Mayo, so we split Mayo between North and South. This all happened I suppose in 1985, fairly quickly actually, and we have been in action ever since. In the early days we were based in Claremorris former vocational school and then we moved to Ballinrobe in 1989. We had a scheme in the agricultural Institute. Then we moved to the Town Hall in 1990, until 1995, when we renovated these premises and we have been here since. We located in Ballinrobe because we needed to recruit suitable FÁS trainees which met the criteria. Up until 1995 we were putting in church records mainly. Then in 1995 we started working on civil records. Church records were mainly complete by then, well 98%. There are some terribly recorded registers. They are a dog’s dinner. We have abstracted what we can from them and if I have the time I would like to go over them again myself. Because I am sure there are some records which have not been interpreted yet. If we went back to them we maybe could put on another couple of hundred records but for all intents and purposes they are 100% finished”.

***Where did the funding come from?***

“In Charlie Haughey’s day [1989] the Digital/DEC people in Galway was [*sic*] being fired money left, right and centre by the government to try and keep them leaving, they were about to pull out. So they were awarded the contract, Digital and DEC which was a software company, to develop a computer programme and supply computers to computerise records. These things went all over the country. I think they spent about a million and a half pounds at the time on the project. Money also came from the Ireland fund and the peace and reconciliation. That bought photocopiers, filing cabinets and other ancillary equipment. And the system worked. It still works, I

use it all the time. It was good for putting in records but useless for research. You had to take every thing off the screen and write it out again. In 2002 we decided to transfer the stuff to PCs. In fact I did it myself and then IGL put money in. I think £40,000 for the software. All the data was transferred over to that system. What happens now is Mayo is going to put the records on a pay-per-view basis”.

***Is this jointly with North Mayo?***

“Yes, we have always worked in tandem. We have grant approval for North and South Mayo but I think it will develop nationally. I don’t know how it’s going to work out. We are making more money now printing and selling records than sitting down for hours doing research. People will spend more money doing their own research than use our services. Our lead-time for a complete service takes about three months. But if they do their own research they can go off in the wrong direction. If they get the wrong name at the start then they will go down the wrong route. We are going pay-per-view but that doesn’t mean we will stop what were doing. In fact pay-per-view frees up our time. We may charge an annual subscription and thereafter they may pay for each download. Or we may not charge an annual subscription but charge a bit more for each record. In that case they would have to buy a block of individual downloads, because if you charge each time, then it incurs credit card charges. The system works by looking at the details of the selective relative and then produces a list of best fits from the details supplied. The list is arranged with the most likely one first. The customer can then access the complete details for that person. If it turns out that the details don’t match then they can access the next record down. Each time they do that they get charged against their account”.

**Appendix vii. TIARA focus group transcript (recorded with six members on Sunday 26 March 2006 at Buswells Hotel, Dublin)**

***What motivated you to begin research of your family history?***

“Good question. But I think everyone is different. Curiosity about the past is not for everyone” (Sean).

“My family members were dying off and if the family history is not put down it will be lost” (Mary).

“I had an interest in Family History. We think our ancestors came from Mayo but three generations lived just outside Manchester, England before emigrating to the States” (Alice).

“I grew up in a family of great storytellers. My mother was not Irish but she knew stories about Ireland. I became interested in Irish history and culture” (Lisa).

“My grandparents rarely talked about where they came from. There were family tragedies they wanted to bury and forget about” (Catherine).

“They walked away, either by force or because there was nothing for them to cling onto. They would say. ‘You are now American. That was then this is now. We don’t want to talk about those days’” (Sean).

“They wanted to assimilate. They didn’t want a heritage that they walked away from” (Elizabeth).

“I was not allowed to talk to my grandparents. I could listen but I was not allowed to question. It was considered very rude to ask them questions” (Mary).

“My grandfather never spoke to me. But why did I get an interest in family history? Around 50-60 I started to ask who I am, why I am, where do I come from? I tend to



think that's one of the root causes of wanting to do genealogy. And excuse me ladies, I am the only man in the room. I think most genealogy is a woman's thing. It's something to do with their mothers" (Sean).

"I think it's because my mother was the basic family storykeeper. She told stories about here siblings. Her grandparents were gone then" (Lisa).

"Was she the only daughter?" (Elizabeth).

"No she was the middle daughter. But her sisters, my aunts, lived with us and told stories. They all settled in Florida. Their husbands all died early. They bought property. There were 30-40 cousins all living within six blocks of each other. Those women ran the whole family" (Lisa).

"Its back to the tribe" (Sean).

***Is there a matriarchal family unit in Irish America from your ancestors? Who emigrated?***

"Both" (Catherine).

"All of my relatives were married when they got to the States. But in the case of one grandfather and one great grandfather they came a year or two earlier to earn the passage money for the rest of the family. So women learned to carry the family on their own without husbands" (Mary).

***So how close is the Irish Community in, say marrying within the culture?***

"That's gone. Maybe for a couple of generations. From the Second World War" (Sean).

"Yes from that point" (Alice).

***Lets move on to what it is you are expecting from Irish genealogy services. What, if you like, is your wish list?***

“I don’t just want a list of dates and places. I want to know about the culture, history, reasons why” (Sean).

“My family come from Cork. I want to visit and see local records” (Elizabeth).

“Local centres have failed. I would not get past the lobby. I give them my details and I get back the exact same details in a fancy piece of paper. When I walk away, when I go home, I gonna (*sic*) say, ‘I told them that. That’s a deception. That’s an Irish thing’” (Sean).

“I want hands on” (Mary).

“Not to look at Americans as dollar signs. Ok, there’s money to be made from it.. I have a cousin who sends money over. It is like \$50-\$100 every couple of months” (Elizabeth).

“Not only that, if you go to look at the family sources yourself you read what’s there differently” (Alice).

“Right, because we’re connected to them. We know. The head of the household may not be the name you actually look up but every single person under that person is your family and they may miss that” (Mary).

“That’s another thing I have with my trips to Ireland. If you ask a specific question, I talk about the directions, time of day, is the sun out?, is it raining?, you’re going to get a specific answer. Americans don’t do well with their questions. They’re really meaning they want broad information. But the Irish give them answers back directly so you don’t learn anything” (Sean).

“I came on the trip last year and I’m here again this year. During the year there was talk of some of the depositories going down to the country – Roscommon,

Strokestown, Youghal – decentralisation. One of the beauties of coming to Dublin is that the depositories are here. I don't want to come to Dublin and catch a train to Roscommon or Youghal. So decentralisation for me is working backwards" (Lisa).

"I have done research in other European countries. I have been to England and done research in the Manchester area and I have been there three or four times, where we go to the local studies library and the PRO. Then we go to the places to see what the local church looked like, where is the street?, take photographs, and talk to people locally. At one point we were doing French Canadian research and went to my father's ancestral village in Normandy" (Alice).

"We have an unquenchable desire to go all the way to the very end of the quest. We want to know where they were born, married, died; what did the place they lived in look like?" (Mary).

"There is something to keep in mind. My sister and I do family research for the Irish side of the family. We do have family reunions from time to time and we usually have new information. Everyone has a notebook and collect the new information. Many of my cousins have come to Ireland because we have certain information. Many of my cousins have come to England because we have certain information. They haven't looked up a single bit of information, but they went to the towns. So its not just the genealogists that are interested" (Elizabeth).

"I think it was Roscommon Public library that I went into last year. I found the 1901 Census, the 1911 Census, Griffith's Valuation. They were exceedingly helpful but I couldn't find any information for Galway" (Catherine).

"That's a precious unknown secret. Most public libraries are wonderful" (Sean).

"I come from a family that doesn't travel. They are timid. They stay in. I am the only one of my family who does. What I give to my family is the excitement of what I've seen. Family members I have met. Going to...Spiddal [Galway], where we come from – cousins are there, everybody's there. And now my family is getting excited to

travel, although they wont necessarily go there on their own. And my mother was from Canada, that part. Now they want to travel” (Alice).

“Turn that right back. The people that first left Ireland, the adventurous ones like yourself, sent letters back home which said ‘hey this is a great place, this is where I live’. So it’s just a reverse of direction” (Sean).

“I started research because I had lost so many people who were important to me and this is the way of bringing, especially my paternal grandfather, back to me. And now I see his parents. I see his brothers and sisters. I see them so I have created a full family. And now I come over here and see where they lived and came from and that’s the whole package for me” (Mary).

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