



CONNECT

*The newsletter of AGI and ASGRA,
the accrediting bodies for Irish and Scottish Genealogists*



Issue No. 16:

August 2020

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*The Newsletter of AGI and ASGRA,
the accrediting bodies for Irish and Scottish professional genealogists*

Welcome to our sixteenth Newsletter. Our sincere thanks are extended to those who have contributed, commented or made suggestions to improve the publication during the long period since our last publication as well as to those who have helped in any way with this Issue.

As you may be aware, the May 2020 Issue of CONNECT was cancelled as we were in the depths of the Covid-19 pandemic at that time. Since then the situation has eased a little in both Ireland and Scotland and our archives and libraries are starting to open up. We wanted to bring you up to date with the latest situation as well as to provide you with some interesting and, hopefully, informative articles.

We look forward to safely emerging from this pandemic and to actively re-opening our archives and to getting back to some sort of normality, although we all know that we can never really go back to how we once were!!

In this quarter's edition we may not have lots of articles on events that have taken place or a long list of unmissable dates for your diaries, but we have put together an interesting set of articles from both Scotland and Ireland.

We continue our series on the history of AGI and provide a very useful update report on the status of the re-opening of the major archives in Ireland. We also continue with our series of interviews, this time with the new Hon. Treasurer of AGI. As usual, we hope you find the Issue useful and enjoyable. Again, as before, we would welcome your comments and suggestions.

If you would like to contribute please get in touch with one of the *CONNECT* editors:

Michael Walsh from *Accredited Genealogists Ireland (AGI)*

or

Lorna Kinnaird from the *Association of Scottish Genealogists and Researchers in Archives (ASGRA)*

The production responsibilities have been cheerfully assumed by John Grenham MAGI.



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Alliance Sub-Group Team members:

From AGI: Paul Gorry, AGI Council Member
Robert Davison, AGI Council Member
Michael Walsh, AGI Council Member
From ASGRA: Janet Bishop, Chairman ASGRA
Ian Marson, Secretary ASGRA
Lorna Kinnaird, ASGRA Council Member

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Secretary: Ian F. Marson
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wheechmcgee@hotmail.co.uk

Contributions welcome

Any content for inclusion in **CONNECT** will be most gratefully received and can be sent to either:

Michael Walsh (AGI) at michael9walsh@gmail.com

Lorna Kinnaird (ASGRA) at dunedingenie@virginmedia.com

Our next edition is scheduled to go out in November 2020 and the deadline for submissions is 30 September 2020.

We hope that you enjoy reading the Newsletter!



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News from Scotland and Ireland...

News from Ireland

For many of us in genealogy a source of great frustration has been the closure of our national archives, libraries and research facilities during the Covid-19 pandemic. As we nervously emerge from months of lock-down, **Nicola MORRIS MAGI** who heads up the CPD Team at AGI, has prepared a set of important notes about the opening of major archives in Ireland which we hope will be of great interest and practical use to our readers.

National Library of Ireland:

The National Library of Ireland Main Reading Room and Manuscripts Reading Room are both open to readers by appointment. The main reading room can accommodate 14 readers (where it could previously accommodate 75). The manuscript reading room can accommodate a much smaller number. It is possible, when on site, to access material on the open shelves.

Material from the open shelves that has been consulted will be quarantined for 72 hours after it has been handled by the reader. It is necessary to order the material you wish to access at the time of booking your appointment. You can find details for booking appointments on the NLI website: https://orders.nli.ie/orders/1997/build/add_reader_details

Appointments are for the full day. Lockers are available and there are sanitising stations throughout the building as well as a one way system for entering and departing the main reading room.

National Archives of Ireland:

The National Archives of Ireland Reading Room is open to readers by appointment, which can be booked on their website: <https://www.nationalarchives.ie/product/book-the-reading-room/>

The archivists on duty have requested that you submit a list of the documents you wish to consult in advance of your visit, so that they can be ready on arrival, but this is not a necessary part of your booking and material can be ordered on arrival, however, it may take time to be produced.



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Appointments are for the full day, although the reading room must be vacated between 12.30 and 2pm for cleaning. There are lockers available, but the table and chairs for the lunchroom have been put beyond access. Only one person can travel in the lift to the reading room on the 5th floor.

General Register Office:

The General Register Office Public Research Room on Werburgh Street, Dublin has reopened to the public by appointment only. Customers will be facilitated while ensuring physical distancing and a safe environment for customers and staff. To request an appointment please e-mail GROResearchRoom@welfare.ie and you will be contacted by a member of staff who will help you to arrange an appointment. Appointments are for a half day only: 9.30am - 12 noon or 2 - 4.30pm.

It is also possible to order digital copies of records from this office, with the relevant reference details. The orders can be made via the email address: The e-mail address is GROResearchRoom@welfare.ie

Valuation Office:

The Valuation Office (VO) in the Irish Life Centre, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin is currently closed but there are plans in motion to reopen the public office in late summer or early autumn. It is possible to place orders with the VO for digital copies of the Revision Books for counties that have already been digitised.

Registry of Deeds:

The Registry of Deeds in Henrietta Street, Dublin is currently closed to the public, but plain copies of memorials can be ordered from their offices. No details have been published for when the Registry of Deeds will reopen their public counters and research rooms.

Dublin City Library and Archive:

The DCLA on Pearse Street in Dublin city is currently closed to the public and there is no timetable for reopening the reading room. DCLA is however open for telephone and email queries:

Telephone: +353 1 6744999 **Email:** dublinstudies@dublincity.ie cityarchives@dublincity.ie



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Representative Church Body Library:

The Representative Church Body Library (RCBL) in Braemor Park, Churchtown, Dublin, is currently closed and there are no notifications about their plans to reopen. Updated information about timelines is available on their website <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/about/rcb-library>

However, you can still contact the office with queries by email on library@ireland.anglican.org

PRONI:

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) in Belfast is currently closed and there is no information about when it is likely to fully reopen. However, plans are under way for PRONI to welcome visitors back to its Reading Room. Details of this service, which will initially be by appointment only, will be announced soon. Please consult the website:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/proni>

GRONI:

The Research Room at the General Record Office of Northern Ireland (GRONI) in Belfast GRONI is currently closed to the public and there are no notifications of when it is likely to reopen.

Phone: 0300 200 7890 (if outside the UK: +44 300 200 7890).

Cork City and County Archives

The Research Room at Cork City and County Archives which is located in the Seamus Murphy Building, 32 Great William O'Brien St, Blackpool, Cork opened in the week commencing Monday 20th July 2020 on a restricted appointment basis.

Phone: +353 (0)21 450 5876.

Note:

This information was prepared a few weeks ago, so it is worth checking archive websites to obtain the latest information.



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News from Scotland

Similar to AGI, many of us in Scotland have faced and are continuing to face the closure of the National Records of Scotland and the ScotlandsPeople Centre at Edinburgh. Frustration is felt right across the industry in not being able to visit archives and carry out our normal daily tasks for our clients. Despite restaurants and café's now opening, the archives remains fully closed. It may be months more until the archives are opened from lock-down, but we live in hope that this is in the not too distant future. Those of ASGRA able to work continue to receive client commissions and therefore are still working fine. With the limited opening of the National Archives at Kew in London, it is hoped that something similar in Scotland will be arranged in due course. But the way we have always carried out research has and will be forever changed following the Covid-19 epidemic. It is not a nice situation to be in, but true to our nature as genealogists – we will adapt and embrace the change well.

SAFHS Conference 2020 – “It’s a Sair Fecht!”

It certainly is a sair fecht! ASGRA was joint host of the SAFHS Conference 2020, which was to have taken place in The Brunton, Musselburgh, in April. Unfortunately, however, like many other events this year, the Conference had to be cancelled – disappointing when so much work had gone into the organising and the preparation of ASGRA contribution to the lectures, which would have been presented by Lorna Kinnaird, John McGee, Val Wilson and Alex Wood. We decided that we wouldn't let their hard work go unrecognised, and a revised version of their talk is now on YouTube.





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Key events leading to Radical Rising

- Two Jacobite Rebellions in 1715 and 1745
- American War of Independence 1776
- French Revolution 1789 – 1799
- Irish Rebellion 1798
- Napoleonic Wars 1803 -1815
- Post-war Depression & treatment of returning veterans
- Corn Laws from 1815 onwards
- Peterloo Massacre, Manchester 1819



Address Posted 1 April 1820

"Roused from the torpid state in which We have been sunk for so many years.....

Equality of Rights (not of property) is the object for which we contend...

Let us show the world We are not the lawless, Sanguinary Rabble,... but a Brave and Generous People determined to be Free...

Liberty or Death is our Motto."

By order of the Committee of Organisation for forming a Provisional Government



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1820: THE KEY PLAYERS

James Wilson (3 September 1760 – 30 August 1820)



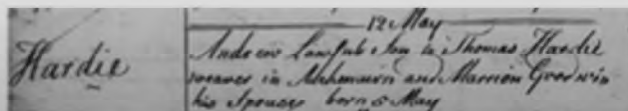
1820: THE KEY PLAYERS

John Baird (1 September 1790 - 8 September 1820)

John Baird, a former soldier, was a weaver in the village of Condorrat where he had been born. He led the Radicals who marched on the Carron Ironworks near Falkirk in 1820.

Andrew Hardie (1793)

Andrew Hardie was born in Auchinairn, in Cadder parish, on the outskirts of Glasgow, in 1793. In 1820, he was a weaver in Glasgow. He was second-in-command of the march on the Carron Ironworks.





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What changed?

- Transportation of the Radicals to NSW
- Young radicals fled to Canada fearing persecution
- The Reform Bill (passed in 1832) – votes for the many not the few
- King George IV issues Royal Pardon in 1832
- The 1820 Society (Scotland Free or a Desert) established 1969



"Suffering countrymen, I remain under the firm conviction and I die a martyr in the cause of truth and justice, and in the hope that you will soon succeed in the cause which I took up arms to defend."

It's a Sair Fecht: The 1920 Radical Rising

This very informative presentation is worth a look.

Part 1 is at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iX2pdmhrIo>

Part 2 is at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJ18ch1q_p0



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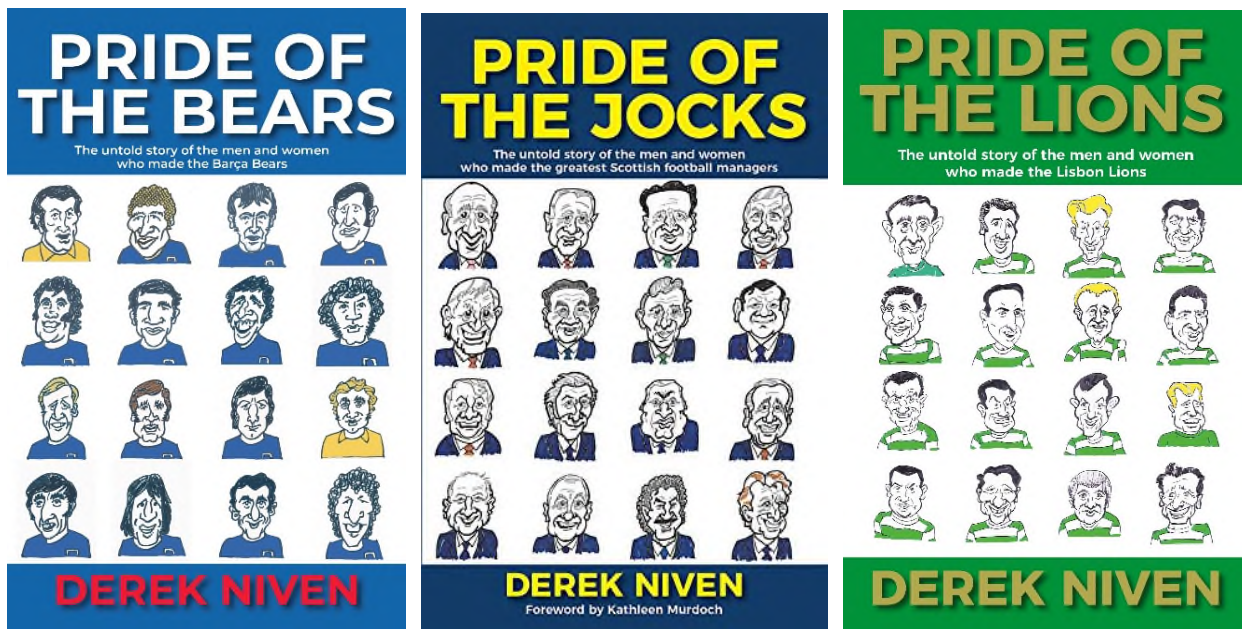
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Pride of the Bears publication by John McGee

John McGee, ASGRA treasurer, has just published his third book in the “Pride series” his “Wha D’ye Ken Ye Are?” book *Pride of the Bears* under his pseudonym of Derek Niven. It relates the family histories of the 1972 European Cup Winners’ Cup winning Rangers players, going back to the early-19th century for all 16 medallists. The histories take the reader on a journey to find players’ ancestors migrating across Scotland, Ireland and heaven forbid, even a bit of English ancestry! This follows on from his previous two books; *Pride of the Lions*, the family histories of the 1967 European Cup winning Celtic players and *Pride of the Jocks*, the family histories of the greatest Scottish football managers, including Busby, Shankly, Stein, Ferguson and Dalglish.



Hitting the right note!

From about this year, and for many years afterwards, Mr. Isaac Cooper was a famous teacher of Music and Dancing in the town. "He lived much respected, was an excellent teacher and a man of great versatility of talent. An idea of his abilities may be learnt from the following extract from an advertisement of his of date 30th March, 1783. We think few professors of the present day will undertake one half of what he promised to do, yet we believe he was capable of performing all. In addition to his giving lessons in dancing, he gave instructions ' on the harpsichord or pianoforte, violin, violoncello, clarinet, pipe and tabor, German flute, the fife in the regimental style, the hautboy, French organ, the Irish organ (bag) pipe; how to make flats, sharps, and the proper



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chords with the brass keys; and the guitar after a new method of fingering (never taught in this country before), which facilitates the most intricate passages. He likewise begs leave to inform all who have a taste for Highland reels that he has just now composed thirty Strathspey reels for the violin and harpsichord, with agreeable and easy basses, all in the true Strathspey style. His motives for publishing these were his observing the public so much imposed upon by people who have published reels and called them new, and at the same time were only old tunes and new names, and most of them on the wrong key.' In a subsequent advertisement he informs the public that he had been in Edinburgh studying music and dancing, and the people of Banff having been imposed upon by ignorant teachers of dancing, who taught their pupils 'last season for seven months without showing any of the scholars any of the positions,' he promises to teach his pupils 'all the dances in vogue, such as the *Minuet de la Cour*, the *Prince of Wales' Minuet*, the *Devonshire Minuet*, and variety of Cotillions and Allemands, &c, &c. He has likewise learnt from the best masters how to teach two performers to play upon one harpsichord or pianoforte, which is greatly in vogue, and has a most beautiful effect, and never was taught in this country before.' Then follows a discovery in guitar playing, by which a performer may transpose music into different keys without the aid of a moveable bridge. Mr. Cooper was a clever man, and composed a number of beautiful airs, such as 'Miss Forbes' Farewell to Banff,' 'Lord Banff's Strathspey,' 'Banff Castle,' and many others of equal merit." (Davie's Caledonian Repository.) The pieces Mr. Cooper published appear in "A Collection of Strathspeys, Reels and Irish Jigs for the Piano Forte and Violin, to which are added Scots, Irish, and Welch airs composed and selected by I. Cooper at Banff. Price 5s. Sold by the Music Sellers in London, Edinburgh, &c." It contains 58 tunes, among which occur : " Miss Dirom," " Lord Banff," " Banff Lasses, a reel," " Mrs. Gordon of Aberdour's Strathspey," " Mrs. Abernethy's Strathspey," " Mrs. James Duffs Strathspey," " Mrs. Rose's Strathspey," " Miss Rose's Strathspey," " Miss Forbes's Farewell to Banff," &c, the last of which is given at the close of this volume, the original form in which it here appears being somewhat different from that found in modern musical works. There appear to have been other editions of Cooper's Collection, but all are now rare.



Image: Google Images

From Cramond, W. "The Annals of Banff" ca 1880.
In Elgin Library Local History Collections

Found by Bruce Bishop, ASGRA Member



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On a lighter note...

During this lockdown we have been looking for interesting contributions from members which perhaps strike a lighter note. This may be about unusual exhibits in museums we can't visit or recollections from archives in far flung places that we can't travel to!!!

In this Issue we are lucky to have received an interesting article about the origins of the famous mild expletive "**Gordon Bennett**" with the help of the Police Museum of Northern Ireland.

The article is by Robert Davison who is a long standing member of AGI and who lives in Co. Down in Northern Ireland.

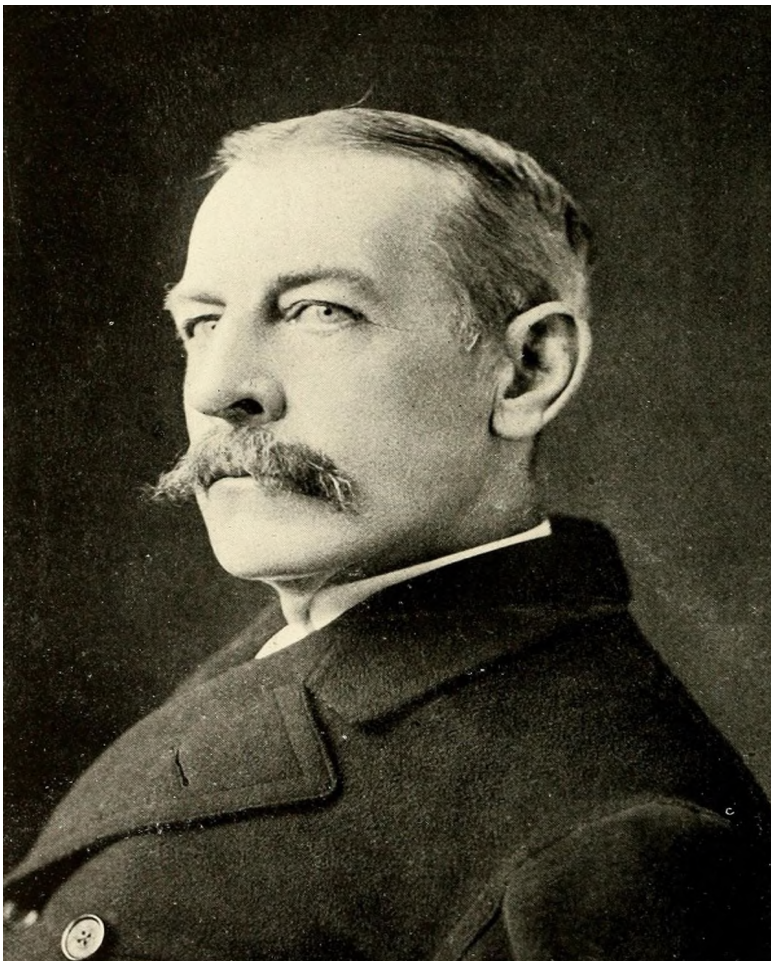


Fig 1 – James Gordon Bennett (source unknown)

Gordon Bennett!

The title may mean something to those of us of a 'certain age' but back in the day, it would have been an expletive in fairly common use by our parents, relatives and friends. Some of us (me included) still use it occasionally.

Gordon Bennett (see Fig 1) was a real person, born in the USA in 1841 of an Irish mother and Scottish father, and made his fortune in publishing in New York in the early part of the 20th century.

However, his scandalous life-style, forced him to live in Europe and his notoriety gave birth to the phrase '**Gordon Bennett**' to express shock/ horror/ concern/ incredulity about an event or a surprise.



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The inspiration for this article relates to a silver trophy (see Fig 2) that had been 'resting' in the vaults of Danske Bank, formerly the Northern Bank, Northern Ireland. The trophy was presented to the Police Museum of Northern Ireland in 2019. This was the Gordon Bennett Motor Race Cup which was commissioned by the Automobile Club of Great Britain (later the Royal Automobile Club) from West & Co. Jewellers, Dublin, in 1904. It was in recognition of the assistance rendered by the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) in policing the Gordon Bennett sponsored road races in Ireland. West & Co. closed a few years ago and was the oldest jewellers in Europe; boasting both the Royal and Vice Regal Warrants. The firm also supplied the Constabulary Medal (Ireland) from 1842 until 1922.

The trophy was probably placed alongside the force's other silverware in the Officers Mess at the Phoenix Park (Dublin) Depot of the RIC and came to Northern Ireland after the disbandment of the RIC in 1922. The circumstances under which it came to Northern Ireland are still being investigated by the Police Museum in Belfast.



Fig.2 – The Gordon Bennett Motor Race Cup
(ack. Hugh Forrester)

In his book on policing Ireland, Conor Brady asserts that *“Much of the Mess’s collection of silver plate had been taken north by departing officers when the RIC was disbanded. But in time, some of it was returned to ‘The Depot’ (H.Q. of An Garda Siochana in The Phoenix Park, Dublin) as a gesture of goodwill”*

Now, for the ‘petrol-heads’ here is some background information on the circumstances leading to the commissioning of the trophy. Motor racing came to the British Isles for the first time in 1903 with the Gordon Bennett road race in Ireland. Authorities in Britain were reluctant to close roads



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for racing but after vigorous lobbying, central and local government in Ireland agreed to close roads for the race.

The first race was held on 2 July 1903 on a circuit of roads in counties Kildare, Carlow and Queen's (now Laois). A figure of eight course was arranged with the start at Ballyshannon crossroads between Athy and Kilcullen in Co. Kildare with a total distance of 386 miles. In the days before '*elf and safety*' just the dangers of driving on poor, gravelled roads, driving cars with inadequate tyres and braking were hazardous enough. However, there was the additional and unpredictable dangers of pedestrians and animals straying onto the circuit. Sensibly, the authorities enlisted the RIC to 'police' the event to ensure the safe passage of cars and deal with any other hazards. £1,000 was given towards the cost of policing although an additional grant of £2,000 was required when it was fully costed. It proved to be the largest use of RIC personnel in the history of the Force with over 3,000 men deployed and assisted by military and stewards. The race and the policing thereof proved a big success and there were no reports of any injuries apart from a stray dog which was hit by one of the racing cars!

There were twelve international cars competing in the race and they were painted in their national colours. In tribute to Ireland for hosting the race, the British team chose green for their car and this was the first use of what became British racing green. The German team in their Mercedes won the race at an average speed of 49.2 miles per hour, but the driver was a Belgian, Camille Jenatzy.

I gratefully acknowledge the assistance given by Hugh Forrester, Curator of the Police Museum, Northern Ireland in providing the images for this article and for his permission to use parts of his article on Gordon Bennett from the Summer 2019 edition of '*Proceedings*' the Journal of the Police Historical Society (NI).

Robert Davison MAGI



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How has lockdown treated you?

There has been nothing like it!!!! All major archives closed, meetings cancelled and genealogists forced to stay at home self-isolating with nothing on the telly and only an occasional zoom meeting to break the monotony!!!

What impact did this lockdown have on you and on your life? Perhaps you took up a new interest or activity that could be safely practiced at home or started reading all those books about genealogy that you always promised you would read but never did or perhaps you used the time to reflect on where your life was going and on what changes were needed to your lifestyle and so on.....

If you would like to share your experiences about how lockdown provided opportunities as well bringing disruption, about how you reacted to these new and formidable challenges or about how you survived during this amazing period of history, then we would love to hear from you!!!

We would welcome any interesting articles by genealogists and researchers on how the lockdown treated them, on what they learnt, how they changed and how they adapted their lives - serious or humorous!

Please get in touch with:

Michael Walsh (AGI) at michael9walsh@gmail.com

or

Lorna Kinnaird (ASGRA) at dunedingenie@virginmedia.com



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Dates for your Diary...

In Ireland...

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

The *Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Programme* for 2020 has been put together by Nicola Morris MAGI and her capable team. Undertaking CPD is a mandatory requirement for professional genealogists in Ireland which allows them to maintain their accreditation. Attendance is monitored by AGI.

Several CPD days had been arranged for 2020 but all had to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Nicola and her team are planning a series of remote events for summer and autumn using modern technology to provide online lectures on how to access prominent Irish archives and use their resources. It is hoped to cover *The Genealogical Office, Wills and Testamentary Records* and *The Registry of Deeds* and also to provide information on how to access court records. John Grenham MAGI and the doyen of Irish genealogy will give a tele-presentation on running an Irish genealogy website. In addition, a series of short tele-lectures are planned for the virtual "*Back to our Past*" exhibition which is scheduled to run from Friday 18 September 2020 to Sunday 20 September 2020. It is also hoped to stream these lectures on a dedicated video or TV channel. All these talks will be followed by question and answer sessions.

These events are currently only at the planning stage and more information will become available later.

2020 AGM of AGI

The 2020 AGM of AGI is currently still planned to be held on Wednesday 2 December 2020. Like last year, this has been pulled forward from a Friday. This is largely because of the difficulty experienced in recent years of booking a suitable venue for our Christmas Lunch in a busy seasonal period. Clearly as the country emerge from the pandemic these arrangements may have to be revised.

It is hoped that there will be a Christmas Lunch afterwards at a local hostelry.



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In Scotland...

ASGRA Council Meeting: 4th Sept 2020 likely to be via Zoom.

ASGRA AGM Friday 5th February 2021.

Future meetings

Due to the lockdown situation and the likelihood of restrictions on travel and group meetings the use of online conference facilities will be used for the foreseeable future and the next Council meeting in September would be again be a “Zoom meeting”. The situation will be monitored but consideration was given to the possibility of doing the same for the December Council meeting. The AGM in February might not be able to go ahead in its current format, options were to postpone or to have an online meeting. Further discussion will take place as the situation changes.



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Getting to know each other ... Kit Smyrl

Each Issue we interview members of each organisation so that members can get to know other key players better.

Each Issue we interview members of each organisation so that members can get to know other key players better.

This time the newly elected Hon Treasurer of AGI Kit Smyrl MAGI will be answering the questions.



Kit Smyrl first came into professional genealogical research when he joined his brother Steven working in probate research based in Dublin during 1990s.

He specialises in the complex area of Irish probate estates which involves searching for the relatives of people who have died intestate without any known next-of-kin.

Kit became a full member of the Association in April 2018.



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Ref.	Questions
Q1	Name: Kit Smyrl
Q2	Email: Kit@masseyandking.com
Q3	Occupation: Legal Genealogist
Q4	Location: Dublin
Q5	Areas of research and specialisms: Legal probate, beneficiary tracing
Q6	What brought you into genealogy? I started off doing small research jobs for my brother, Steven, when I lived in Scotland and found I had a knack of being nose-y and thinking laterally, which is essential in this type of research.
Q7	What has been your favourite piece of research or most interesting assignment? Tracing the granddaughter of a residual legatee with nothing to go on but a name, no parent's names, no address, nothing to connect her with the person who had died, only to find out that in the words of the solicitor that the granddaughter would "become beyond wealthy". I was delighted for her as she



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	had no idea that her grandmother had been a residual legatee in a persons Will.
Q8	<p>What is your favourite Archive and Why?</p> <p>The GRO (<i>General Register Office</i>). I like the whole rooting through the indexes, finding 20-30 possible entries with the hope that the one I need to progress my search is there. If it's not then a bit head scratching and that lateral thinking normally gets me where I want to be.</p>
Q9	<p>How is your own family tree?</p> <p>That's my brother Steven's project, and a good job he has done of it.</p>
Q10	<p>What tips can you offer a beginner?</p> <p>Don't go rushing off at all angles, write down what you know, then ask everyone in your family what they know then draw up a pencil family tree and annotate with what you know ,then have a plan as to what you want to find out. Above all have patience as you'll need plenty of it.</p>
Q11	<p>How do you relax or what other interests do you have?</p> <p>I spend a good bit of time mountaineering and hillwalking with a good bit of mountain camping thrown in, plus there's the relaxing job of walking my dog Milo.</p>



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the accrediting bodies for Irish and Scottish Genealogists*



Issue No. 16:

August 2020

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Finally...

Spotlight on the history of AGI...

In November 2019 we introduced a new series of articles on the history of AGI (formerly APCI). The first article by Paul GORRY MAGI described the events leading up to the founding of APCI in December 1988.

In this second article Pamela Bradley FAGI takes up the story from the birth of APCI describing the development of AGI from this point up to the present day

Pamela has worked in Irish genealogy for many years joining APCI, as it then was, in 1987. She served as Hon. Secretary of APCI from 1992 to 1994 and as President from 2003 to 2006. She has worked in the Genealogical Advisory Service from its inception in the *Genealogical Office* and was made a Fellow of Accredited Genealogists Ireland (AGI) in recognition of her outstanding contribution to Irish genealogy over many years.

The history of AGI by Pamela Bradley



For the November 2019 issue of “Connect” Paul Gorry submitted an article on the foundation and early days of the Association of Professional Genealogists in Ireland (APGI) up to 1988. The following takes the account further with the development of APCI into AGI.

My professional background was the study of Social Science at Trinity College, Dublin, with a subsequent qualification of Hospital Almoner, later termed Medical Social Worker. But like many people interested in history and genealogy, I eventually changed track and joined APCI in 1987, having passed scrutiny by the newly appointed panel of Assessors.

APGI was founded in 1986 with the cooperation of members from both north and south of Ireland and over the years AGMs have been held in Belfast and Dublin.



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In 1989 free genealogical consultations for the public were started in Dublin, initially in the Genealogical Office, later in the National Library of Ireland, and eventually also in the National Archives of Ireland, staffed by APGI members. These sessions helped visitors to undertake their own research, giving them useful information with which to start tracking their families.

When the Church of the Latterday Saints (the Mormons) decided to establish an ancestry advisory centre of their own, they sent members to study relevant services in many countries including Ireland. After reviewing their finds in detail David Ouimette, their “Information Architect”, wrote to the Hon. Secretary of APGI in 2005:

“We travelled to dozens of venues to observe how people do family history research. I am happy to report that the most impressive guidance we saw was provided by the Genealogy Advisory Service at the National Library and the National Archives in Dublin.”

I served as Hon. Secretary of APGI from 1992 to 1994 and as President from 2003 to 2006. Over those years I saw the association grow in membership numbers and become better known worldwide. Much of this was due to Paul Gorry who organised four highly successful Irish Genealogical Congresses, three in Trinity College, Dublin in 1991, 1994, and 2001, and one at St Patrick’s College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare in 1997, with many APGI members among the speakers. Participants came from around the globe and lasting friendships were forged. Arrangements were made at each congress for one hundred participants to have individual free genealogy advisory sessions from members of APGI.

In 1993 Albert Reynolds was Taoiseach when plans were made to decentralise some government departments away from Dublin, and to relocate them to other areas around the country. Roscommon was Albert Reynolds's home county and he proposed that the General Register Office of Births, Marriages and Deaths should be moved to Roscommon town. Consternation! Both the general public and genealogists were dismayed by the suggestion which would cause difficulty of access, and newspapers and airwaves showed widespread concern. Ex Taoiseach Dr Garrett Fitzgerald joined the debate and wrote to APGI:

“ I am glad that my article and broadcast have been helpful, and I hope that our joint efforts will be successful.”

They were, and eventually compromise was achieved with personal access to the Registers maintained in Dublin, and postal and on line queries dealt with in Roscommon, which proved a satisfactory solution.



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In 2006 APGI's fellow organisation, the Irish Genealogical Research Society, celebrated its 70th anniversary. The President of the IGRS, Sir David Goodall, accepted an invitation from the Chief Herald of Ireland, Fergus Gillespie, to address a gathering in the Heraldic Museum in Dublin. The occasion was combined with the presentation to APGI by Fergus Gillespie of the Letters Patent, the Grant of Arms being a superbly inscribed document on vellum, signed by the Chief Herald. The inscription starts:

“Whereas petition hath been made unto me by Henry McDowell on behalf of the Association of Professional Genealogists of Ireland of which he is President...” and it goes on to list the Association's motto - “*Petere Fontem*” - “to seek the source”, and to illustrate the Association's badge which depicts the cupola of the Bedford Tower at Dublin Castle. The Office of Arms had been lodged in the Bedford Tower in 1903 and it became the Office of the Chief Herald and the Genealogical Office in 1943 until 1981, eventually finding its present home in Kildare Street, Dublin. The APGI Grant of Arms may be seen on the AGI website.



Fergus Mac Giolla Easpaig
Príomh-Aralt na hÉireann.

Iml. 2, leath 75.



Volume 2, folio 75.

Fergus Gillespie
Chief Herald of Ireland.



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An Affiliate programme was established at the 2012 AGM to assist those in the early stages of practising as professional genealogists, to help them to work towards full membership of APGI. It was arranged for each affiliate to link with a mentor and this has proved very successful in achieving the aim of membership of APGI, or AGI as the association is now termed. The name of the association was changed to the briefer “Accredited Genealogists Ireland” at the AGM of 2015.

AGI continues to be very active at many public events such as the annual Royal Dublin Society’s “Back to Our Past”, staffing a colourful stand, where members also provide a free advisory service for visitors. Regular attendance at Continuous Professional Development (CPD) events gives AGI members interesting talks and visits to relevant venues several times a year and helps to maintain standards.

In 2016 AGI entered into a valuable alliance with ASGRA, the Association of Scottish Genealogists and Researchers in Archives. Members of both organisations have maintained enthusiastic links, attending conferences and events in each others countries, as well as AGMs, and hopefully this will continue as soon as the Corona Virus permits. The joint newsletter “Connect” is produced several times a year, and is edited by AGI member Michael Walsh and ASGRA member Lorna Kinnaird.

Unfortunately the Corona Virus has caused the closure of the National Library and the National Archives in Dublin but a free Genealogy Advisory Service online commenced on 1st April 2020. AGI member Nicola Morris has set up a dedicated email address whereby people seeking advice over family searches may outline their queries. These are passed on by the National Archives to AGI members who assemble the relevant information which is relayed back to the enquirer by the National Archivist on duty. This virtual service has proved very successful at: query@nationalarchives.ie

Pamela Bradley FAGI

End of Newsletter