

CONNECT

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

Welcome to our second Newsletter!!

Our first Newsletter was released in July and was well received. Our thanks go out to those who commented, made suggestions to improve the product and to those who contributed or helped with publication.

In this quarter's edition we report on a historic joint Continuous Professional Development (CPD) event in Belfast that was organised by AGI and ASGRA in September. There are also articles on forthcoming events and on a major archive also in in Belfast. We continue with profiles of office bearers from both our organisations and present another interesting set of interviews.

We hope you find it useful, enjoyable and, as before, we would welcome your comments and suggestions. We are considering introducing a Member's Blog where members can express views and comment, give advice or seek information. If you would like to contribute please get in touch with one of the CONNECT editors.

This Newsletter has been put together by Michael Walsh MAGI from AGI and Kirsteen Mulhern from ASGRA. The production responsibilities for the Newsletter have been cheerfully assumed by John Grenham MAGI.



CONNECT

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



Issue No. 2 :

November 2016

Page 2

Table of contents

News from Scotland and Ireland.....	3
Building Bridges: Making Connections - 2017 SAFHS Conference	3
AGI and ASGRA – Historic first joint meeting; Belfast, September 2016.	4
AGI Returns to the expanded National Archives Genealogy Service	7
ASGRA member Ian Marson reports on the recent visit to the Scottish Genealogy Society Library in Edinburgh.....	8
Meet the Council Office Bearers.....	9
Stuart Coles, ASGRA Secretary.....	9
Anne Marie Smith, AGI Hon. Secretary.....	10
Getting to know each other.....	11
Introducing Kirsty Wilkinson from ASGRA.....	11
Introducing Nicola Morris from AGI	14
PRONI – NORTHERN IRELAND'S ARCHIVES.....	18

AGI Council Office Bearers

President: Máire Mac Conghail
mairemacconghail@eircom.net

Hon. Secretary: Anne-Marie Smith
info@apgi.ie

Hon. Treasurer: Sandra Doble
sandraandliam@eircom.net

ASGRA Council Office Bearers

Chair: Janet Bishop
genealogyscotland@gmail.com

Hon. Secretary: Stuart Coles
enquiry.scc@gmail.com

Hon. Treasurer: John McGee
wheechmcgee@hotmail.co.uk

Any content for inclusion in **Connect** will be most gratefully received and can be sent to Michael Walsh (AGI) michael9walsh@gmail.com or Kirsteen Mulhern (ASGRA) scottishgenealogy@gmail.com.

Our next edition will go out in February 2017 and the deadline for submissions is 31 December.

We hope that you enjoy reading the Newsletter!



CONNECT

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



Issue No. 2 :

November 2016

Page 3

News from Scotland and Ireland...

Building Bridges: Making Connections - 2017 SAFHS Conference

Preparations continue for the 2017 Scottish Association of Family History Societies conference which ASGRA will be hosting on 22nd April next year in Fife. A fantastic range of knowledgeable speakers will be sharing their knowledge and experiences with delegates and there will also be a range of short talks running alongside the Family History Fair.

Delegates can book by completing the form available on the ASGRA website at: <http://www.asgra.co.uk/conference.php> and full details of the event can also be found on the same page.

In brief, the delegate talks will be:

10:00 **Before the Bridges: Crossing the Firth of Forth in Earlier Times**

Bruce B Bishop, FSA Scot, ASGRA

11:10 **Connecting People and Places: Maps and Family History**

Craig Statham, National Library of Scotland

14:00 **Connecting to Life Through Death: What Death Certificates can tell
Historians, and Demographers**

Dr Eilidh Garrett, BSc, PhD

Genealogists,

15:10 **Only Connect: Finding your Scottish Ancestor on Findmypast**

Paul Nixon, Findmypast

The shorter talks which are open to all include:

Stuart Coles (**Research into the Crichton Institution in Dumfries**);

Dr Geoff Hare (**Who was the real Gordon Bennett?**);

Ian Marson (**Using English Records**);

Helen Kelly (**Irish Genealogy Research**).

There will also be a round up of recent research by the University of Strathclyde Genealogical Studies Programme students.

All in all, it is a really exciting programme of talks and we hope to see many of you there.



CONNECT

The newsletter of AGI and ASGRA,

the accrediting bodies for Irish and Scottish Genealogists



Issue No. 2 :

November 2016

Page 4

AGI and ASGRA – Historic first joint meeting; Belfast, September 2016.

Having been a regular visitor to Belfast since the 1970s I've witnessed the city blossom into the interesting, cosmopolitan metropolis that is now is. So as a recent graduate from Affiliate to Member of Accredited Genealogist Ireland (AGI – formerly The Association of Professional Genealogists in Ireland – APGI) I had no hesitation in signing up to a two day professional development event to be held September 2016 to mark the founding of APGI in that city 30 years ago. The event was also a historic occasion as it marked the first meeting of AGI with the Association of Scottish Genealogists and Researchers in Archives (ASGRA), a like-minded group with whom AGI have recently formed an alliance.



The first day's activities were based primarily in the enviable modern and well-equipped Public Record Office of North Ireland (PRONI), located in Belfast's iconic Titanic Quarter. Following a welcome from AGI president Máire Mac Conghail and ASGRA chairman Janet Bishop, we were treated to two lectures, the first on the subject of 'Irish and Scottish migration across the Irish Sea' delivered by Patrick Fitzgerald from the Mellon Centre of Migration Studies followed by the ever interesting William Roulston from the Ulster Historic Foundation speaking about the 'Ulster Plantation'. A robust question and answer session followed revealing that delegates from both sides of the Irish Sea were wide awake and listening with interest, as well as providing feedback from their own unique perspectives.

A choice of activities was offered for the afternoon session and I choose a PRONI repository tour led by in-house archivist Desmond McCabe. PRONI houses a vast amount of material and as any experienced researcher knows it takes time, persistence and not a little sweat to find the way around things. McCabe unveiled some of the vagaries of PRONI's cataloguing system adding tips and other insights that will be put to good use on the next research trip north. A valuable tip was learning of the PRONI vast and seemingly easily accessible sources for placenames and local history, a useful path to follow when surname searches runs dry.



CONNECT

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



Issue No. 2 :

November 2016

Page 5

Day two began in the Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland's premises on College Green with a most informative talk on the history of the Society and tour of the Society building by Librarian and Archivist Valerie Adams, a most engaging speaker clearly at home with her subject.



The day culminated with a tour of the Linen Hall Library, a gem of a repository located in Donegall Square almost directly opposite Belfast City Hall. The Library houses an excellent collection of genealogical material and our guide on the day provided a most insightful glimpse of what one might uncover should any of us return with time on our hands. Founded in 1788, the private Linen Hall Library is the oldest library in Belfast and is renowned for its unparalleled Irish and Local Studies Collections. It is the only library to house a Northern Ireland Political Collection, amounting to 250,000 items on the recent 'troubles'.

While all present were clearly enthusiastic about the daytime events, an evening wine reception at the end of the first day followed by dinner (Premier Inn Titanic) could not have gone down better. Many thanks to the organisers (particularly Paul Gorry MAGI) for what was a most enjoyable and memorable first outing.



CONNECT

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



Issue No. 2 :

November 2016

Page 6

The new ScotlandsPeople website – an update

At the time of writing this (early October) the new website has been operational for less than 2 weeks. To say that there have been some teething problems would not be overstating the case! The launch was delayed by 3 days and the site finally went live on 28th September to a mixed response.

The ‘look and feel’ of the website has had a complete overhaul and it is now designed to be more mobile friendly – enabling users to access it more conveniently on phones and tablets. There is also a whole new set of records available – 150,000 records of baptisms, marriages, and deaths from some pre-1855 Scottish dissenting (non-Church of Scotland) churches.

In addition, the index searches are free, there is a new image library which will be added to over time, and access to RCE (Register of Corrected Entries) images are free once you have purchased the main record.

However, there have been a number of areas where the new site has been criticised. There has been some confusion over accessing existing accounts – and users with multiple accounts linked to one e-mail address have had significant issues. ScotlandsPeople staff are working to link up these accounts whenever they are made aware of the problem, but it has not been the seamless transition that was hoped for.

There are a number of issues with which users have been reporting problems. Date filters, the allocation of districts, searches involving cross-referencing of surnames, wildcard searches, image viewing, and other features have all been reported as not performing as expected.

ScotlandsPeople report that they are working to address all of these issues, and they are currently maintaining a list of known issues at: <https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/technical-help/known-technical-issues> - we can only wait and hope that these early problems can be resolved quickly. There will be a further update in the next issue of Connect.

No.	Name and Surname	When and Where Born	Sex	Name, Profession, Rank or Profession of Father, Name, and Maternal Surname of Mother, Date and Place of Marriage	Signature and Qualification of Minister and Testimony of each of the Witnesses when the Birth entered
12	Alexina Bremner	1887 February Eighteenth A.H. 30 a.m. Barrisdale Tadgac	F	William Bremner Farm Servant A.H. Bremner M.A. Baiten 1885 January 31st Newhill	Wm. Bremner Father



CONNECT

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



Issue No. 2 :

November 2016

Page 7

AGI Returns to the expanded National Archives Genealogy Service

Accredited Genealogists Ireland (AGI) is pleased to announce that it has been awarded the contract to provide the Genealogy Service at the National Archives of Ireland. The Genealogy Service provides free advice for those tracing their own Irish family history, whether using sources online or in the national record repositories in Dublin and Belfast, or indeed on a local level.

On Tuesday 1 November AGI returned to the Genealogy Service after a break of four years. At the same time the service was extended from a half-day to a full-day format, opening from 9.30am to 5.00pm, with a 30 minute lunch break. Each day one of AGI's panel of fully accredited genealogists is on hand to help and assist with genealogical enquiries, from the most basic to the most complex.

The Genealogy Service at the National Archives began in 2003 when the NAI invited AGI (then called the Association of Professional Genealogists in Ireland) to replicate a service it was already providing at the National Library. Until 2007 AGI ran both services. During that four-year period an international survey of genealogical research facilities for the Family History Library, Salt Lake City, reported *'the most impressive guidance we saw was provided by the Genealogy Advisory Service at the National Library and the National Archives in Dublin'*.

AGI regretfully withdrew from the Genealogy Service at the National Archives in 2012 and did not tender for the contract again until now. In the past few years the Genealogy Service was operated by a consortium of genealogists with AGI accreditation. On this occasion the consortium stepped down from the tendering process in deference to AGI.

To avail of this free service you must have an NAI Reader's Ticket. To obtain a Reader's Ticket you must bring two forms of identification (photo ID and a recent utility bill).



CONNECT

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



Issue No. 2 :

November 2016

Page 8

ASGRA member Ian Marson reports on the recent visit to the Scottish Genealogy Society Library in Edinburgh

The ASGRA annual visit to the Scottish Genealogy Society Family History Centre (SGS) took place on the 7 October 2016 and a group of 10 members took part. Initially we met in the Patisserie Valerie just a short distance away from the Library. After breakfast we walked to the Library which is located at Victoria Terrace in the Old Town of Edinburgh where we were met by Liz Watson, the society's publicity officer.



The morning began with a short talk by Bruce Bishop on the history of the SGS which also included a brief history of the building that now houses the library. After the talk we split into two groups, Bruce and Liz took us on a tour of the library showing us the enormity of reference material available on the shelves which has been collected over many years, including the largest collection of Monumental Inscriptions (MIs) in Scotland,

microfilm copies of the Old Parish Registers for every parish in Scotland and journals from all the major Scottish Family History Societies. There is also a unique collection of books, manuscripts, family histories and family trees. Following on from the tour we had time left to browse the collections with an opportunity to undertake some research.

Our Secretary, Stuart Coles was elated to have found some useful information in the MI records on a family he is currently researching for a client and he concluded that "the visit was a worthwhile experience". Stuart was of course speaking for all, the visit was enjoyed by everyone.

Editor's note: The Scottish Genealogy Society was founded in 1953 and helps with research into Scottish family and local history. It is run by volunteers and based in a building on the picturesque Victoria Terrace in Edinburgh. As well as the library and family history centre, they run a series of classes to help researchers get more out of available resources. Further details about the SGS can be found at www.scotsgenealogy.com



CONNECT

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



Issue No. 2 :

November 2016

Page 9

Meet the Council Office Bearers

In each Issue we will introduce two of the principal office bearers from AGI and ASGRA. In this second Newsletter it is the turn of Stuart Coles ASGRA Secretary and Anne Marie Smith Hon. Secretary of AGI.

Stuart Coles, ASGRA Secretary

Stuart Coles was born in Leicester in the English midlands and after graduating from Bristol University taught science and technology in Salisbury. It was there in the early 1970s that his life-long interest in genealogy began. An important part of his early research, which still continues, concerns his German mother's background with investigations in Germany, Austria, Denmark and South Australia. By a bizarre twist of fate his mother's 1st cousin 1x removed, Elliot Pflaum, a flight commander in the Australian Flying Corps, was part of the ANZAC contingent who shot down the legendary German ace Manfred von Richthofen (the Red Baron) over France in 1918.



Following a long career in teaching at various levels and educational administration, Stuart and his wife relocated to Dumfries ten years ago to be closer to her Perthshire homeland with its proud connection to her ancient Clann Dhònnchaidh. They spent several years renovating a former Free Church of Scotland manse in Dunscore parish, which is now their home, where Stuart's skills in building, plumbing and electrical work were invaluable.

Stuart gained formal qualifications in genealogy, palaeography and heraldry from Strathclyde University, and now offers genealogical research services for south-west Scotland. He specialises in medical family history and lunacy, criminal ancestry, transportation & emigration and ancestral tourism in Dumfries & Galloway. He joined the ASGRA Council in 2014 and became secretary in 2016. Other hobbies and interests? No time for anything else except watching motor racing - but

that is another story!

Stuart can be contacted by email at:

enquiry.scc@gmail.com for research enquiries

asgra.sec@gmail.com for ASGRA secretarial business.



CONNECT

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



Issue No. 2 :

November 2016

Page 10

Anne Marie Smith, AGI Hon. Secretary

Anne-Marie Smith MAGI, currently holds the office of Hon. Secretary of Accredited Genealogists Ireland (Formerly APCI). The role of Hon. Secretary involves the day to day administration of the Association, including both arranging and attending bi-monthly council meetings and taking the minutes at such meetings. The role also involves notifying AGI members and affiliates of all upcoming events being organized by AGI, including CPD, AGM, BTOP, as well as Lectures/Talks by AGI members at various events. The Hon. Secretary is also responsible for the administration of applications for membership of AGI when assessed by the independent Board of Assessors. She also serves on two sub-committees of AGI.



Anne-Marie's interest in genealogy began with her love of history at school, and in later years while researching her own family tree. Genealogy subsequently became her passion, and she joined AGI (APGI then) in 2013 as one of the first Affiliates. She was admitted as a member in January 2014.

Anne-Marie is also a founder member of Raheny Business Association (1989), and is still a member.

Contact Details: Accredited Genealogists Ireland info@accreditedgenealogists.ie



CONNECT

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



Issue No. 2 :

November 2016

Page 11

Getting to know each other...

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

Introducing Kirsty Wilkinson from ASGRA

This time it is the turn of ASGRA member Kirsty Wilkinson to introduce herself. Kirsty is based in Edinburgh and she runs [My Ain Folk](http://myainfolk.com) undertaking a wide range of genealogy research. She has a particular interest in palaeography (deciphering squiggly old handwriting!) and is currently serving as an ordinary member on ASGRA Council.



Kirsty Wilkinson

Name: Kirsty F. Wilkinson

Email: enquiries@myainfolk.com

Occupation: Genealogist & Researcher in Archives

Location: Edinburgh, Scotland



CONNECT

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



Issue No. 2 :

November 2016

Page 12

Areas of research and specialisms:

Research at the National Records of Scotland.

Heir-tracing and living relatives searches.

Transcription of Old Scottish and English Documents.

What brought you into genealogy?

My mother began tracing our Scottish ancestry in the 1980s but was limited by distance and having a young family. The interest was rekindled after my grandmother died in 2001 and a few previously unknown family photos were discovered in her home. As I was then living in Edinburgh I began to do a little research as a favour for my Mum and quickly became hooked on genealogy! She suggested I might be able to turn my passion into a job and in 2006 I launched my business, "My Ain Folk".

What has been your favourite piece of research or most interesting assignment?

One of my most memorable assignments was tracing a family of Scottish travellers for an heir-tracing case. Common surnames, marriages not being officially recorded and no permanent addresses all made this particularly challenging, but it was very satisfying to finally track down all branches of the family and it gave me an insight into a community I previously knew little about.

What is your favourite Archive and Why?

I spend a lot of my time researching at the National Records of Scotland. It's wonderful to be able to access so many records for the whole of Scotland in one location and I feel I have barely scratched the surface when it comes to exploring the many fantastic sources held there.

However, when research dictates, I also enjoy the opportunity of visiting smaller local archives and familiarising myself with their collections. Poor relief records are a particular interest of mine and these are mainly held locally.



CONNECT

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



Issue No. 2 :

November 2016

Page 13

How is your own family tree?

Somewhat neglected! A few years ago I tried to start again from scratch, fully documenting all my searches and sources, but that got put on hold due to lack of time. I occasionally do some research into my own family, particularly when visiting an archive in an area where I have family connections, but I still have a lot of work to do.

What tips can you offer a beginner?

With so much online now it's easy for someone to get started on researching their family history without really knowing what they are doing. I would recommend that those starting out buy or borrow a genealogy book aimed at beginners. That will provide a basic understanding of both the sources and techniques used for tracing family history and ensure that the family tree has a solid foundation.

How do you relax or what other interests do you have?

Outside of genealogy, a particular interest of mine is Japanese anime and video games which has led to a more general interest in Japanese culture and history. My partner and I are just about to embark on an 18 day trip to Japan which I am very much looking forward to.

Any other comments or information to add?

I am a volunteer researcher with Birthlink, a Scottish charity which provides assistance to adults affected by adoption. It's very rewarding to carry out research which is so meaningful to people and to assist in reconnecting families.



CONNECT

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



Issue No. 2 :

November 2016

Page 14

Introducing Nicola Morris from AGI



Nicola is well known in genealogical circles in Ireland. She grew up in Dublin city and obtained a degree in History from Trinity College Dublin. In 2007 she became a director of Timeline Research Ltd.

Nicola has written extensively in many genealogical publications including "Irish Roots". She has also worked on several television series including the BBC programme 'Who Do You Think You Are?' Nicola was Hon Secretary of AGI for a number of years and is currently a leading member of the National Council.

Nicola Morris

Name: Nicola Morris

Email: research@timeline.ie



CONNECT

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



Issue No. 2 :

November 2016

Page 15

Occupation: Professional Genealogist
Location: Sandymount, Dublin 4
Areas of research and specialisms: All Ireland for the 18th, 19th and 20th century. Specialising in Irish military and Dublin city records
What brought you into genealogy? I completed a Degree in History at Trinity College Dublin and just after graduating found work with a company that specialised in Genealogy. As soon as I started research I knew that this was what I wanted to do. A combination of detective work and historical research was exactly what I wanted and I haven't looked back.
What has been your favourite piece of research or most interesting assignment? Piecing together the genealogy of a tenement family in Dublin city for Chris Moyles' episode of Who Do You Think You Are? was an opportunity to delve into the history of the city of Dublin and track down all sorts of sources that might document a family that lived in pretty dire circumstances. While hunting the city for potential records I had the chance to explore the crypt of St. Audeon's Church, the Franciscan Friary, Jacob's Biscuit Factory records and houses on Henrietta Street.



CONNECT

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



Issue No. 2 :

November 2016

Page 16

What is your favourite Archive and Why?

I love working in the Registry of Deeds on Henrietta Street. Perched on a stool with a 200 year old volume, looking out across the rooftops of the city on an autumn afternoon can be a joy.

How is your own family tree?

My grandfather had already undertaken a great deal of work on our family tree before I became a genealogist. I remember the stories he told of visiting Churches to track down records when I was a child and never appreciated that it was something I might end up doing. With the release of more and more records online I occasionally return to our family tree to see if I can fill in any blanks. So far my family reaches back to France or Italy, Cork and the court of Henry VIII.

What tips can you offer a beginner?

Try to be organised and efficient when undertaking research commissions. It is easy to spend too long locating and searching records. It can be difficult to strike a balance between 'going the extra mile' for your client and earning a living from your work. As a professional, it is important to make sure you do not undervalue your work and expertise.

How do you relax or what other interests do you have?

My passion is open water swimming and I take any chance I can for a quick dip in the Irish sea throughout the year. It is a great way to relieve stress. I also bake to relax, so after a bracing swim I can enjoy some well earned tea and cake.



CONNECT

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



Issue No. 2 :

November 2016

Page 17

Any other comments or information to add?

Genealogical research is always challenging and after over 16 years as a genealogist I am still learning about our history and new potential sources for research.



CONNECT

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



Issue No. 2 :

November 2016

Page 18

Focus on...

In each Issue we will focus on a Scottish or an Irish archive.

The purpose of these guides is to give some “top tips” for practical use of the archives based on the experience of users. So you will hopefully find out some different details to those advertised on the archive’s website!!

We hope that this will help new users feel more comfortable using these archives for the first time. The authors of these articles are also happy to hear from new users of these archive if they have any further questions about them.

PRONI – NORTHERN IRELAND’S ARCHIVES

We live in a world of acronyms and to anyone in the genealogical and research ‘community’ the letters PRONI will instantly conjure up the title of the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. It’s my intention in this brief article to give you an informal browse rather than a guided tour!



PRONI is the Archive for ‘public records’ collected from Government Departments as well as records deposited by businesses, organisations and members of the public. There are literally millions of documents which relate chiefly, but (and this is important) not exclusively to Northern Ireland. At this stage it is important to have an appreciation of the geo-political set up in Ireland. The current political entity of Northern Ireland comprises the six counties of Antrim, Armagh, Derry/Londonderry, Down, Fermanagh and Tyrone. Although Northern Ireland is often referred to as ‘Ulster’ the historic Irish

province of Ulster also included the counties of Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan which are now in the Republic of Ireland. An obvious example of the over-lap would be the number of church records from ‘Border Counties’ i.e. Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan and Louth, and these can easily be located by checking the *PRONI Guide to Church records* (see www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/proni-guide-church-records) Also, the huge collections of records from notable families (e.g. Downshire Papers) reflect their land and property holdings all over Ireland.



CONNECT

The newsletter of AGI and ASGRA,

the accrediting bodies for Irish and Scottish Genealogists



Issue No. 2 :

November 2016

Page 19

All the basic information you are likely to need can be found via the website, although PRONI no longer has its own 'dedicated' site. It now has to be accessed through www.nidirect.gov.uk which is a gateway to all Government services. Personally, I don't find the new website as 'user-friendly' as the old one, but each to their own! Once you get to the Home page there are four main sections that provide useful information and these are **Your Visit; Your research; Record Keeping at PRONI and Conflict related records**. Each of these has sub-sections which give more in-depth information. In the 'Your Visit' section you can find out how to travel to PRONI by land, sea and air and most importantly, the requirements for Registration. There is even a **pdf Registration Form** you can download and complete to take along on your first visit. At the front desk you will be 'badged' and issued with a photo identification card which gives you access throughout the public areas of the building and enables you to order documents. Your card can be clipped into a lanyard, if one is available, although there is a regrettable tendency for lanyards to go missing!

Even if you haven't visited this repository, you've probably made use of the digitized records on their website. For many years, researchers have had access through the PRONI website to the Index of Will Calendars, with, in some cases, images from the Calendars of the actual Will. These cover the three Probate Districts of Northern Ireland (Armagh, Belfast and Derry/Londonderry) and inevitably, there will be some of these entries particularly from Derry/Londonderry and Armagh which will stray over the border into the Republic. There are also entries prior to 1923 for the Principal Registry, which was of course Dublin pre-partition, which have not yet been included in the online Index. Some of these may have a Northern Ireland connection so a view of the actual Calendars, available in the Public Search Room, is essential.





CONNECT

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



Issue No. 2 :

November 2016

Page 20

Although researchers generally like to get their hands on the physical material, it is not always possible due to conservation needs, and PRONI has gone a considerable way to meet both needs. The signatories of the **Ulster Covenant (1912)**; the **Freeholders records**; the **Belfast and Ulster Directories** and the major achievement, the **Valuation Revision books**, can all be viewed online.



The Research Room – electronic ordering, internet access, laptop points

That well-worn cliché ‘state of the art’ is often used to describe the building, facilities and general ambience of PRONI and perhaps is justified. Although it has now been open for 5 years in its new home in Belfast’s Titanic Quarter, PRONI still retains an ambience of ‘newness’. The general public facilities, lockers, toilets, cafeteria are all well-appointed and there are areas where tables and chairs are provided for the individual or groups to ‘chill-out’ when the

brain and eyes have become desensitized through attempting to decipher unreadable microfilmed church records! The Staff are personable and very helpful and are not afraid to come out from behind their desk in the Public Search Room (PSR) to help you with your research queries.

The **eCatalogue** is the fully searchable database to gain access to PRONI’s records and this is also available on the website. The PSR has many desks with computer terminals to allow you access to the **eCatalogue** and also to other helpful websites such as the National Archives of Ireland Census records. A very useful innovation coming soon to the PSR will be access through dedicated computer terminals to all the General Register Office of Northern Ireland (GRONI) records. Although the ‘historic’ (date restricted) GRONI records of Births, Marriages and Deaths are available online, the more recent events can at present only be accessed at the Search Room in GRONI’s Belfast office at Oxford House, Chichester Street. This new facility will enable PRONI to become a ‘one-stop shop’ to connect up Civil Registration records, church records and Census returns; what I would term the ‘building-blocks’ of family history research.

Finally, in keeping with its ethos of openness and accountability, PRONI has operated for many years a Forum where invited ‘lay people’ can meet with the Archivists and Administrators to be appraised of current and future developments by them and to pass on pertinent comments from the ‘users’. The Forum usually meets four times a year in the Conference Room and tea, coffee and ‘biccies’ are provided. I



CONNECT

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



Issue No. 2 :

November 2016

Page 21

represent AGI at the Forum and have done so for the past seven years. It has certainly helped to raise the profile of first, APGI and now AGI and I have established a good working relationship with the PRONI staff. I hope that I have 'whetted your appetite' for a visit to PRONI and when you eventually make the trip to Belfast, I can only hope that the document or documents you are seeking were not in the safe on the Titanic!

Robert C Davison MAGI, Co. Down

Robert is a member of the AGI National Council

End of Newsletter