

**Some Irish Comings and Goings – Aspects of Irish Migration**  
**The Irish Genealogical Research Society 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Symposium**  
**Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> October, Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House**

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you for inviting me here today to be with you for your 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Symposium, and in such wonderful surroundings.

As we know, 2011 marks a very significant year for the Society; the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its foundation. And Ireland is heading into a decade of very significant anniversaries too, anniversaries which will highlight in particular the development of Ireland's relationship with its nearest neighbour, anniversaries which will demonstrate just how far we have come in this relationship, and just how much we have dealt with the legacies of our past.

Such anniversaries make us think about our own personal places in history. How do we link in? Who are we linked to? And genealogy allows us to find our place, to link us to events, movements and migrations large and small, to link us to others.

The theme of this year's symposium is Irish Migration and nowhere perhaps has experienced more, or indeed benefitted more, from Irish migration throughout the centuries than Britain.

And we have had a troubled relationship in the past. However, the strength of our links, our direct family ties, has allowed us to overcome those difficulties, has given us the ability to understand and appreciate the other, has made us in turn understood.

The Irish who emigrated here, and their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, made and continue to make a hugely positive contribution to virtually every aspect of British society. As a result, relations between Ireland and Britain have never been better. They are marked by cooperation and partnership, rather than conflict and division.

Genealogy and genealogical research was a vital tool for this development, for fostering this understanding. Genealogy allows us to discover, demonstrate and understand those links which bind us together. It allows us to find our place in history and therefore better understand and appreciate the present.

Of course, it is not just Britain which has hosted Irish emigrants. The extent of Irish migration throughout the centuries has bequeathed us a diverse global family. Speakers today will be discussing the Wild Geese and the Flight of the Earls, the Scots Planters in Ulster as well as the Irish Presbyterians who left Ulster for America in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a story which perhaps deserves to be far better known than it is. But wherever Irish Communities have sprung up and thrived, they all share a strong sense of community and enduring commitment to Ireland. They all value the links to each other and to home.

Most recently this was demonstrated so clearly by the pride Irish and British people around the world took in the success of the Queen's visit to Ireland in May; pride in the warmth of her welcome, pride in her obvious delight in being there, pride in how we have left the shackles of the past behind us and emerged as confident equal partners on the world stage. And this visit was followed almost immediately by the visit of another, a new favoured Irish son, US President Barack Obama, who came to cement his links and direct family ties to a small town in the middle of Ireland. Something which would never have happened were it not for some dedicated genealogical research.

The success of these visits is due in no small part to the role and efforts, over generations, of the Irish Community here in Britain and America, of Irish groups and friends of Ireland and organisations such as this Society, which since its foundation has devoted itself to the essential reconstruction and collection of documents which would otherwise be lost, in fostering understanding, tolerance and those vital family links.

As Edmund Burke once said: People will not look forward to posterity, who never look backward to their ancestors

I hope you all enjoy the symposium

Thank you