

Finding Irish Cousins: A Mini Case Study

I BELIEVED THE SEARCH for my Irish-born grandfather, Michael Shea, would bring quick results, for his tombstone in Omaha, Nebraska indicated that he was born in Cahersiveen, County Kerry in 1859. His death certificate revealed his mother's maiden name: Julia Falvey. It seemed all I had to do was to get myself to Cahersiveen and everything would be revealed.

Well, five years later, after searching miles of microfilm at the National Library of Ireland, spending countless hours with the genealogist at the National Archives in Dublin, combing through umpteen mildewed church documents in Cahersiveen, (not to mention the gallons of tea consumed in Irish cottages), I was no closer to finding any trace of his existence in Ireland — no shred of information that could lead me to family.

Then, while in Dublin one rain-soaked afternoon, I found an article in an Irish magazine advertising the O'Shea/Shea yDNA project in County Kerry.

Interested, but not thoroughly convinced of this scientific mumbo jumbo, I held onto this article for two years before finally deciding to take the plunge and go the scientific route in my genealogy expedition. The easy part was securing the necessary cheek swab from my brother. The hard part was what to do once the results were in. It was my thinking that there would be a match in the O'Shea data bank that would put me in touch with any Irish cousins still living in Cahersiveen.

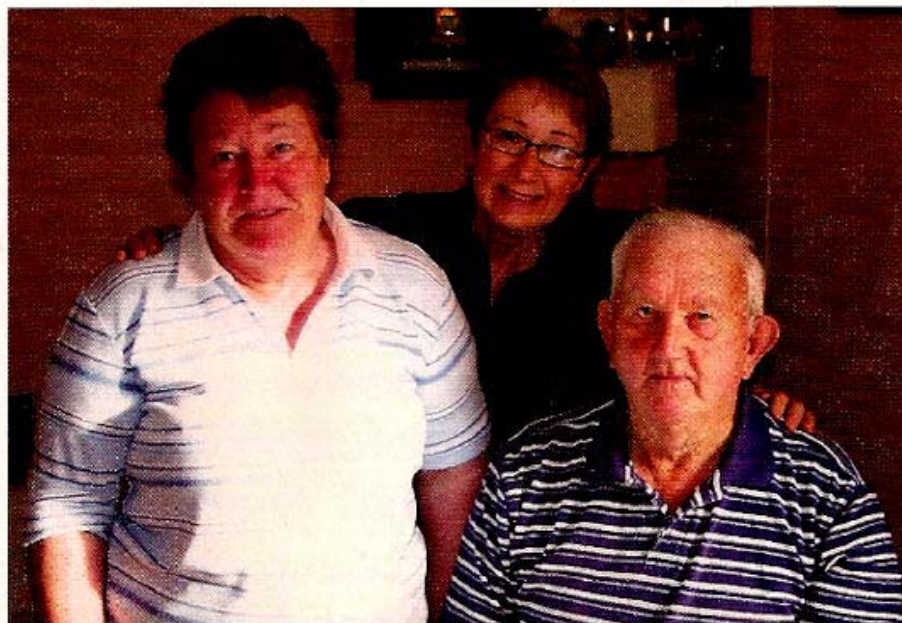
Unfortunately, my brother's results did not closely match anyone in the O'Shea project, but I was now connected to a network of O'Shea's throughout the world — I no longer felt alone in my quest. Expertly guided by one of the project administrators,

Sharon Shea Bossard recounts her search for her Irish-born grandfather.

Margaret O'Shea Jordan, I had a renewed purpose for my next trip to Ireland. My mission was to find

take the test.

One month later, the results indicated a close match with Patsy O'Shea. Michael John was not a match. Finally, after years of searching, I found my Irish cousins. Had it not been for the yDNA O'Shea/Shea surname project, I would have had no way of proving my lineage to the O'Shea's in the Glen. The Omaha gravestone, erroneously inscribed with the town of Cahersiveen, led me on a wild goose chase. Don't trust information from any source



Sharon Shea Bossard, center, with Maureen and Patsy O'Shea, The Glen, Ballinskelligs, County Kerry.

a yDNA donor, someone in the Cahersiveen area, who could be a match.

Armed with a new plan, my search centered on two areas just outside of Cahersiveen: Portmagee and the Glen. The old Glen church records indicated one Julia Falvey living in that area in the 1850s. Now to find a donor or two willing to contribute a cheek swab. Locating two O'Shea fellows, Patsy (the Glen) and Michael John (Portmagee), they both agreed to

unless you can back it up with proof. The cost of yDNA testing was well worth the price, for the rewards of identifying family in Ireland brought much celebration and closure.

Visit www.findingmyirish.com and www.osheaclan.org for additional information.