



THE O'SHEA CLAN SOCIETY

Promoting Interest in the History & Genealogy of the World-Wide
O'Shea Clan

Newsletter No. 1

March 2005

Greetings!

In February 2005, a committee of four was set up to promote the O'Shea Clan interests. The committee comprises: James O'Shea, Margaret (O'Shea) Jordan, Brian O'Shea all of Cork, Ireland and Patrick O'Shea (also yDNA Administrator) based in Minnesota, USA.

2005 also sees the setting up of the O'Shea Clan website www.osheaclan.org, by the Irish branch of the O'Shea Clan. This is in conjunction with the already established www.sheaclan.org which hosts the O'Shea Clan yDNA test results as well as much clan history and genealogy. The new website aims to help O'Sheas (and variant names) with their respective genealogical research as well as promoting clan activities in general. This is our first newsletter. We welcome articles and snippets which you think might interest others, for future newsletters.

The articles in the current edition are written by committee members from their own personal experience of researching their O'Shea surname.

Editor,
Margaret (O'Shea) Jordan

Good News for O'Shea Kerry-Ancestor Seekers

Formal state registration of births, marriages and deaths in Ireland only started in 1864. Prior to that, researchers depended mainly on church records both Protestant and Catholic. As the overwhelming majority of Sheas and O'Sheas were Catholic, the latter are the main source of interest. In the diocese of Kerry, Catholic records for baptisms and marriages commence at different years for different parishes with 1830 being a rough average. Some of the records are in poor physical shape and are virtually indecipherable while others are missing completely for certain years. To access these church records in the past one had to visit the local priest and plough through old ledgers. With clergy becoming rather scarce on the ground in Ireland it is now sometimes difficult to obtain their co-operation as other duties take precedence, to assisting tourists locate their long lost ancestors, who may, or more probably may not have come from the parish in question. Some of the Kerry records are available on microfilm at the National Library of Ireland in Dublin but to access them, one needs a formal letter of permission from the Bishop's Office in Killarney. Some may also be available on microfilm from the LDS (Church of the Latter Day Saints) although personally I have no experience of utilising their facilities.

As a large number of O'Sheas or Sheas are descended from Kerry ancestors and need access to Kerry records to trace their roots, the above state of affairs is frustrating and antiquated. There are now signs that things will improve as some years ago all records were withdrawn and sent to Killarney where they are currently being worked on for 'computerisation' as they refer to it. I now understand that the work will be completed

by Autumn 2005. It is not yet decided how one will be able to access these centralised records. They are unlikely to be accessible online which would be ideal. It is more likely that a separate heritage centre will hold the records and all queries will be routed to it. Fees will be involved but although these can mount up, it is bound to be cheaper than traipsing around Kerry not really sure where to go or what to ask for. It's not exactly twenty first century technology but it's certainly an improvement.

In neighbouring Cork, the ancestral home of thousands of O'Sheas, the centralisation of Catholic Church records for Cloyne, by far the largest Diocese in the county, was achieved some years ago when the Mallow Heritage Centre was given responsibility for all inquiries. Although I have heard criticism of their service, personally I have found them helpful and co-operative. I have had reasonable responses to queries such as 'List all Sheas born between 1830 and 1860 in the parish of Clondrohid'. They can be contacted by phone at 353 (0)22 50302 or mallowhc@eircom.net.

James O'Shea, Cork City 29th Mar 2005

Musings on O'Shea Origins

The Ancestors of the present O'Shea family have their origins in Kerry and still many remain in the Kingdom of Kerry. The surname has altered and evolved considerably in the last 1000 years.

In 1899 Miss Hickson produced an article for the Journal of The Royal Society of the Antiquaries of Ireland (JRSAI), Vol 29, mentioning the O'Shea surname. She refers to the Parish of Tuosist on the west of the Beara Peninsula as deriving its name from the **O'Siosta**, which she suggested was the original of the modern O'Shea. In 1587, the Desmond Survey lists this O'Siosta Sept. Also, the O'Siosta surname was frequently written as O'Chuista according to the JRSAI. The parish of Kilmakilloge into the 1600s still was called Kilmackcollok O'Cestie. On the Dingle peninsula [Corcaguine], Dingle was known as Daingean Ui Chuis. In 1601 at nearby Stradbally, a pardon was granted to John O'Coshe. These are tenuous connections to the O'Sheas but worthy of further research.

O'Heerin [who d.1420] in his Topography of Ireland refers to **O'Sheas** having been Kings of Uibh Rathach (present Barony of Iveragh). They were constantly at loggerheads with their O'Falvey cousins in Corcaguine. In 1115 Lochlann O'Falvey was killed by Murchad O'Shea. Then Tadh O'Shea was killed by O'Falvey. In 1158 another O'Falvey leader was killed by The O'Shea. Beyond this internecine strife, The clans were also involved in larger struggles, involving The O'Briens Of Dal Cais, The O'Connors and The Mac Carthy Mors.

At least when struggling with their neighbours it was an even fight [until O'Falveys brought in the Limerick Vikings [their own cousins]. Getting involved in the larger struggle resulted in Murchad O'Shea being exiled in 1124 by Cormac Mor MacCarthy. In the 1300's, we find another clan leader having migrated to Tipperary and later to Kilkenny where that branch became O Shee or Shee. In 1580 Lord Grey De Wilton annihilated a Papal force at Smerwick on the tip of the Dingle peninsula and initiated a scorched earth policy, which quashed resistance, This must have led to some migration. There had been serious famines between 1270 and 1320 and then in the first half of the seventeenth century they had harvest failures and military upheavals. Famines in 1727/29 and 1739/41 left 10 per cent dead. Then there were

famines in 1799/1801, 1816/17, 1822, 1831, 1845/50 and threatened famines in 1860, 1880s and 1890s in the west.

In spite of all this and more, from a low of 71 and 49 families in all Cork and Kerry [Down Survey] for 1659, the O'Shea Clan rose in numbers to 930 and to 1583 families by 1852. That took stamina and gumption. Since 1700, 10 million people left Ireland. Today 70 million claim descent. I wonder how many were O'Sheas?

Brian O'Shea, Cork, March 2005

DNA Story from County Cork, Ireland

My father, Gerard O'Shea and I were researching our O'Shea ancestry in County Cork and we were reaching the end of the paper trail (circa 1750 for Cork City records). I coaxed my father to do the 25 marker yDNA chromosome test. This he did, in early 2003. Soon afterwards, James O'Shea, also from Cork, who had done extensive research into his O'Shea family, did the yDNA test and he matched my father 25/25. These results were exciting but we still had no idea of how our two families connected and how far back. My father's family had been in Cork City in the mid 1700's, moving out from the city in the 1800's while James's family had been living and farming some 30 miles away, north-west of the city, south of Millstreet, moving closer to the city many years later.

During our genealogical research, my father and I had met up with Brian O'Shea also from County Cork who is also interested in family history and who had also done a lot of work on his O'Shea family. In 2004, Brian O'Shea decided to do the yDNA test. His results, once again matched the other two 25/25. It seemed to confirm that we were all related. Brian O'Shea's family had co-incidentally hailed from an area north-west of Cork City (circa 1800), north of Millstreet not far from James O'Shea's family.

Having compared family trees (during meetings in a local hostelry) with no breakthrough concerning how we were all connected, it was decided that it would be a good idea to upgrade all three to 37 markers to see if further resolution could help to sort out the family connections. The records in Ireland are scarce pre-1800 in rural areas. They tend to go back a bit further in cities to the mid 1700's. While waiting for the results of the DNA upgraded analysis, James had a family gathering for his O'Shea family. He invited Brian O'Shea and representatives of his family and my father and me to represent our O'Shea family. During one of the speeches, James called us his "bionic cousins". It was fun to be part of a bigger group of O'Sheas....almost a mini Clan Gathering as over 160 attended.

Before the results of the upgraded yDNA were available, it was speculated that James and Brian, whose respective O'Shea families were known to have been in the Millstreet area circa 1800, might match more closely than either of them to my father due to the close geographical locations of their known ancestors circa 1800. However, when the results became available in late 2004, it turned out that the two O'Shea families which had come from the Millstreet area had a 34/37 match while my father, Gerard O'Shea matched Brian O'Shea 36/37 and James O'Shea 33/37. According to Family Tree Time Predictor Report, there is an 87% probability of my father having a common ancestor with Brian O'Shea within 200 years. There is a 77% probability of

my father having a common ancestor with James O'Shea within 400 years. The same Time Predictor Report quotes a 76% probability for a common ancestor for Brian and James within 300 years.

We still don't know where the three families connect or who our common ancestors are but the DNA analysis has encouraged us all to persevere with our research. Also, the fact that the geographical proximity (Millstreet area) of two of the O'Sheas was not reflected in the results, is an eye-opener.

We all are interested in the migration pattern of the O'Sheas from Co. Kerry and see that DNA results for other O'Sheas will help to explain the big picture and hence help us to find where we fit into it. We look forward to many more O'Shea men representing their O'Shea families by getting involved in the O'Shea Surname yDNA Project.

Margaret (O'Shea) Jordan, Cork, March 2005