

NZSG IRISH INTEREST GROUP AGM 24 MAY 2026 - CONVENOR'S REPORT

The Irish Interest Group 2025-2026 year commenced on 26 May 2024 when at the conclusion of the AGM your current Committee were re-elected for the following year.

Following the AGM our guest speaker was Andrew Henry from Auckland City Central Library Curatorial Services department. Andrew's presentation covered a wealth of records held in the library's heritage research stocks, in particular numerous magazines, serials and independent newspaper publications. A range of images displayed included covers of local news sheets from organisations such as the Mechanics Institute, Agricultural journals, serialised comics to publications of Church pamphlets and advertising flyers.

Andrew followed up his presentation displaying digital records available online through the Auckland Library Te Kura research service.

A part of our meeting consisted of 20 minute deliveries by Committee members on Irish resources covering numerous records. Our recently received Irish resources were displayed for immediate use.

The Irish Interest Group maintained a presence at the 2025 NZSG EXPO held weekend 9 – 10 August. Over two days we promoted our group and signed up 7 new members. As always the Irish stand were in demand with inquiries, and the resources we tabled were well utilised. Sales of resources and our raffle income contributed towards off setting expenses.

On the evening of 8 August having accepted an invitation from our group we hosted Seán Brosnahan, a curator of Toitu Otago Settlers museum, and an adjunct member of the University of Otago's Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies. To an audience of 30 people at the NZSG FRC Seán entertained with a presentation on 'Michael O'Connor: Auckland's most infamous Fenian?' A Kerry born man Michael came to the colonies as a young man. A digger in various goldfields and as a respected Publican in Auckland's Queen Street and Symonds Street he married the Auckland Police Commissioner's daughter.

In the 1860s Michael became known as notorious 'Fenian O'Connor' at the Thames Goldfield accused of gun-running to rebel Maori and offering hundreds of armed Fenians to support King Tāwhiao against the Government. Who was Michael O'Connor and was there ever really a Fenian threat to New Zealand's peace and security? Seán's lively presentation provided us with the answer.

At our meeting held 30 November Robyn Williams conducted a Special General Meeting for members to adopt the Rules and Regulations for our group. It was moved that the Rules and Regulations be adopted.

Our November meetings are an open day where members are encouraged to display their stories in a format that suits them. The following are a selection of some of the members' presentations.

Member Steve Bovaird's grandmother's Scandinavian background was the last of his 4 grandparents that he began researching. His Grandmother was his last surviving paternal grandparent (she died 2002) he had yet to make the most of her time to understand facts on that branch of the family. His other grandparents were a mixture of Australian, English and Irish origins. He had always put off exploring Scandinavia, mainly due to perceived language challenges.

In 2024 with his wife Steve decided to visit Scandinavia as part of a family trip to Europe. With this trip looming in September 2025, he decided it was the time to understand his Nordic origins. At this time a family link to his Paternal Grandmother's brother became known through DNA matching. This lady lived in Auckland and he caught up with her to share his family findings, the information gained assisted a great deal. Steve focussed his research on Church records of Denmark (Great grandfather) and Norway (Great grandmother) available through ancestry.com. The results enabled him to focus on places where baptism, marriages and burials and funerals had taken place. It was to these places he based his travel plans.

As Steve pointed out researching Scandinavian Church and land records was vastly different to what he had applied to his Irish research trips.

Kathryn O'Neil showcased the three Volumes of the *Annals of Beara* which contain over 49,000 names. The family records range in date from 1776 to 1992, with the majority of records in the period 1822-1956. Many of the families and descendants are traced from their origins in Beara to the United States and other countries. Using her family's DNA matches, Kathryn has been able to use the *Annals of Beara* to verify descendants and identify family connections.

We thanked Kathryn for donating this set of 3 Volumes to our Irish holdings at the FRC.

Titled: "*The Last Protestant Plantation into Ireland - the Poor" Palatines.*" Dorothy Dowgray gave an outline of how over 13,000 Protestant refugees from the Rhineland Palatinate States fled down the Rhine to Amsterdam ahead of persecution and war from Catholic France. Queen Anne's government gave them refuge in London on Blackheath, while many of the Palatine families left for upper New York. About 3,000 people, men, women and children were settled into counties Limerick, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford upon land held by Protestant landlords. Later a smaller number left the estate in Court Matrix, Co. Limerick and settled into the Blennerhassett estates in Co. Kerry.

In addition to the 11 journals our group subscribes to members were asked if there were any county journal publications they would like to suggest we subscribe to. Rosemary Haden promoted the *Kerry Journal* with their special 50 years Volume in particular.

Christine Headford has been researching the surname Mulholland in Co. Down, and c1759 located references under spellings McHallum and McHollen. She suggested research in Co. Down using Ros Davies website <https://www.rosdavies.com/> Use of FamilySearch website was also explored which provided research results.

After 5 years researching the family of Robert Kerr in Co. Limerick Nigel Kerr Grice's Great Great Grandfather was proving difficult to locate. With a Robert Kerr in each generation, the challenge was to locate the missing link for Robert's wife's maiden name. Linking up with a nephew living in Dublin, Nigel was able to access and obtain a copy of the original 1835 Church of Ireland marriage entry. This allowed him to finally complete his aim to name all 5 generations on both sides of his family tree.

On our web page under RESOURCES we promote various websites <https://genealogy.org.nz/Branch-details/11084-s1100100> The

Accredited Genealogists Ireland regularly produce news bulletins primarily pertaining to records held in the National Archives of Ireland and these have been uploaded.

With Remembrance Day having been commemorated 11 November we draw attention to the ONWARD project where an Index and Volumes 1 to 5 have been published and held in the NZSG FRC. We reminded members of the ongoing request for photos of Servicemen and Women who served in NZEF 1914-1918 with publication of Volume 6 due 2026.

This year our first meeting was held 22 February when member Eric Walton spoke about the discovery of a booklet written about his 4x-Great-grandfather, William SCOTT (1765-1858) during his visit to Ireland in July 2025. William Scott founded the Londonderry shirt industry in 1831, which at its peak in the 1840s, employed 250 weavers and over 500 women making shirts, with a wages bill of 500 British Pounds per week. Eric also spoke about some of the records he used to confirm what had been published in the family history booklet. He also discussed how he has been applying his DNA results to expand his tree further.

We were successful with our 2025 application to the Irish Government Emigrant Support Programme for a Grant to purchase resources for our Irish holdings. We received a Grant of NZ\$1,000 and purchased 40 publications covering a range of subjects for various Irish counties.

Other fundraising during the past year will be addressed in our Treasurer's Report. We thank our Treasurer Kathryn O'Neil who compiled our Financial Reports, and Ron Jackson our Auditor who reviewed and signed them off.

We continue to maintain a strong membership, with our quarterly e-Newsletters and regular e-News Bulletins being e-mailed to members around New Zealand throughout the North and South Islands, and to members in Australia, Ireland and Canada.

We thank members for regularly attending our meetings, your ongoing support is essential for the continuation of the Irish Interest Group.

We acknowledge member Anne Brady who at various times has stepped up to assist at meetings.

A special thank you goes to Robyn Williams, ex NZSG Executive Board member, who generously contributes her time and expertise to the Irish Interest Group, and is always on hand to assist when asked.

I extend a special thank you to our Committee for their continued support, without it our Group would not function in the manner it does.

GERALDENE O'REILLY
CONVENOR
NZSG IRISH INTEREST GROUP
24/05/2026