Ramblings About Inishowen

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Editor's Note: This article includes a selection of pictures from a portfolio which may found at dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/447781/EwingSteve_Portfolio.docx.



Claudia (Lubell) and Steve Ewing

My wife, Claudia, and I had a wonderful trip to Ireland on the 10th through the 26th of last August. David Neal Ewing suggested that Ewing Family Association (EFA) members might enjoy reading about our exploits, especially around Inishowen. Be that as it may, here goes ...

Claudia and I have been able to travel to Europe quite a bit during the last fifteen years. My business as a dock builder and her job as assistant principal of the local public charter school on Martha's Vineyard, where we live, have dictated our travel window: we travel for a couple of weeks in early to mid-August.

For years the trips involved camping all over Europe with our two sons, Niko now twenty-six and Arno now twenty-three. Besides saving money, it was fun to be outside, meeting the locals around campfires. The boys are mostly on their own now, so for the last three years Claudia and I have traveled alone and reverted back to staying in hotels with showers and beds.

We went to Scotland in August of 2011 and 2012. During our first trip to Scotland, we looped around the magnificent country staying in four different areas and taking day trips in our rental car. In 2012, we focused on the mid-central belt and the west, visiting Otter Ferry, Loch Lomond and lots of Ewing country. My family tradition (like many of the members of the EFA) takes me back to a William who lived around Sterling.

Thoroughly enjoying Scotland but not having much luck with specific genealogy, we decided to go to Ireland in 2013 because my ancestors supposedly went to Inishowen, County Donegal, Ireland, in 1649 before they left for America at the peak of the 1848 famine. We flew into Dublin and drove straight to Newgrange, the Neolithic passage tomb, meandered around the Boyne Valley and drove to Sligo, where we spent our first night in a little hotel near the beach. As we were leaving the next morning, the chatty desk clerk mentioned that there were Ewings living around Ross's Point, a few miles away. Off we went to William Butler Yeats country.

As a boy, with his brother Jack, Yeats played around, and was inspired by, this beautiful wild area. We followed our noses to a small harbor and sure enough found a truck and a sign advertising Darryl Ewing whose family, it said, had been fishing these waters since 1856. I started up a dialog with a Timmy McCallion, Ewing's fishing competitor, who was very forthcoming about all the Ewings in the area. Darryl, it turned out, was out fishing all day, so we pushed on.

We drove to Buncrana, at the base of the Inishowen Peninsula. Thank God for the SatNav, as they call GPS in the U.K. It saved my marriage on the unmarked back roads! We arrived at the Inishowen Peninsula, overlooking Lough Swilly to the west, and settled into sunset, good food and sleep.

¹ Wikipedia: A passage grave or passage tomb consists of a narrow passage made of large stones and one or multiple burial chambers covered in earth or stone. The building of passage tombs was normally carried out with megaliths and smaller stones; they usually date from the Neolithic Age.



Map of Inishowen

[From: Inishowen, Paintings and Stories From the Land of Eoghan. Paintings by Ros Harvey, Text by Sean Beattie and Martin Lynch. Cottage Pub., Donaghadee, N. Ireland, 2000]

A short note on Inishowen, or Isle of Owen: Owen was a son of Niall of the Nine Hostages, a High King of Ireland. Many of us Ewings trace our Y-DNA to him. He lived in the fifth century and was baptized by Saint Patrick. Owen was buried on the east side of the peninsula overlooking Lough Foyle. His fort, Grianan Aileach (Sun Palace), sits on an 800-foot-high hill at the base of the peninsula, overlooking



Claudia Ewing, Dessie McCallion and Steve Ewing

Inch Island at the convergence of the two loughs – Swilly and Foyle. Thousands of years ago, as the ice from the last great ice age receded, water ran across the Barr of Inch, effectively turning the peninsula into an island. When the weight of the ice lifted the land slowly rose, passing the height of the rising water and it became a peninsula again, as it is now. It is a stunningly beautiful part of the world.

I am Scots-Irish. I've had my Y-DNA tested and am participant SC2 in the Ewing Surname Y-DNA Project's Group 2*.2 Like many EFA members, I'm obsessed with my family history, in all its parts. Claudia's ancestors are Eastern European. Her knowledge goes back to her great-grandparents, and she has very little interest in her family history.

² dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/431003/Lineages/SC2_Steven%20Craig%20Ewing.pdf

To say Claudia humors me is putting it mildly. Having four days out of a sixteen-day trip spent in the locale of my ancestors, was nothing short of a gift from heaven. I joke, but my wife was a really good sport. I actually think, in the midst of hiking around with Dessie McCallion, a local hill-walker and historian, who happened to know, by coincidence, Timmy the fisherman from Ross's Point and Jennifer Doherty from Clonmany Genealogy³ who I had hired to help me with my genealogy work, I saw real interest in Claudia's eyes though she would be quick to deny that!

Ever since I figured out where my ancestors lived in Ireland, I have been buying books about the area from a very nice fellow who runs a used bookstore in Carn(donagh). His name is Peter 'Saddler' Doherty. When we were in his store, and I heard him using his 'Saddler' handle on the phone, I asked him about it. He replied:

There are so many Dohertys on the peninsula, which is only about twenty-five miles in any direction, just using your first name is not enough. Everyone has a nickname. It happens my grandfather made saddles, so that's how I got that name.

I cannot overly express how open and friendly everyone was. Strangers waved when passing, said "HI" on the street, took us in for tea or supper and were as warm as if we were family (which I suppose we actually could be.)

When we asked people if they were from around wherever it is was we were at the moment, they invariably said "No" and then, after a pause, would add "a couple of miles down the road, for maybe 400 years, no less, but not exactly where we are standing."

I am getting ahead of myself.

At this point, let me say that a lot of what I'm relating is very much work-in-progress. The woman who is helping me with my research, Jennifer Doherty of Clonmany Genealogy – whom I highly recommend – is busy right now with a deadline for the late Thomas Phillip 'Tip' O'Neill, Jr.'s family (yes, the Tip O'Neill) who were from Inishowen. Jennifer has to give a few presentations in the States soon so she is taking a bit of a break from working on my ancestry. That being said, I have gained a lot of knowledge from her research to this point.

I should also say, at this juncture, that I traveled to Inishowen armed with a lot of information gathered by myself. Since joining the Ewing Family Association and Clan Ewen, a Scottish organization, I have been doing a lot of research on *Ancestry.com*. During that process I have been fortunate enough to connect with several Ewing cousins. One of them, Dorothy Stewart, has a collection of photos amongst other information. These included beautiful family reunion shots, taken a hundred years ago, of the family I never knew.

My grandfather Ewing disappeared when my father was just one-year old, and was never mentioned until recently. I didn't know anything about my Ewing relatives. Dorothy's photos included pictures of her great-grandmother – and my great²-grandaunt – Esther Ann (Moville) McCandless's trip to Inishowen in 1912. Like all photographs from the day, they all had descriptive notes on the back. [See pictures and notes on the next page.]

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³ www.ClonmanyGenealogy.com



Note on Obverse: Her highness [Esther Ann (Moville) McCandless] in wishing chair. Notice formation of rock six & eight sides to every section. Saw wishing well, organ & all. They say [the well] runs under the sea over to Scotch coast.



Note on Obverse: This is dear old Cardona & Slieve Snaght [Snowy Mountain] in distance where Gramp lived. Carn is about three miles from [Glentogher]. is Market town for all around. That mt. is lovely. higher than mt. Tom. we came through in Bus to Carn. Was there 3 days or more. took bus to Culdaff-Mullenhead & back at night. Very quiet now under free state rule.



Note on Obverse: Rock in Mothers old home pasture on Mess Hill. This is at very top & the horn on the rock (top right) is where she used to sit straddle & guard cows. That is Whin Bush behind me & I'm holding heather picked around rock.



Note on Obverse: Thatched Cottage of Cos' Bella Faulkner over looking Culdaff shore. We spent two lovely days here at the shore, goes right down hill at back. Bella is sitting down, her daughter standing. John & I at gate. House is lower than road. notice huge gate posts. That is all over Ireland & all painted white.

You can imagine how much fun it was to track down the locations in the pictures. Claudia and I would pose in the same way my great²-grandaunt – 'Her Highness' – did a hundred-plus years ago.

The notes on the photograph gave local historians we spoke with useful information when we asked them to pin down leads and locations. One picture showed a street scene in Carn with the mountain Slieve Snaght (Snowy Mountain) in the distance. The note on the back indicates that is where "Gramp lived," about three miles down the road at the base of the mountain.



Note on Obverse: Dunmore Head, Culdaff shore. wonderful view off [sic] this rock of sea & coastline. This is to the right of shore. [This headland is just to the side of the Faulkner house.]



Alexander John Ewing

Now back to our trip: Our first day on the Isle of Owen started with Dessie and Jennifer at Peter's bookshop. Dessie navigated the 1830 Ordinance Survey Maps, made calls to locals and pinned down my Ewing family's land in Glentogher. While Dessie was looking at the maps, Jennifer pulled out a marriage record that she had found earlier. It indicated the address of Alexander John Ewing, my great³-grandfather and an immigrant to Massachusetts The address said "White Park." There is no such place near Carn, but three miles out of town is a 'White House' next to a 'Whinn Park'. A call to a local – whose family has lived in Cashel, the hamlet next to Whinn Park, for centuries – confirmed that "the Ewings lived up over there." The local turned out to be John Cunningham. More about him later.

We piled into Jennifer's car and drove the three miles out of town through the ancient

valley, near the base of Slieve Snaght where three generations of my family lived and worked.

Of course, along the way all sorts of bits and pieces of history were shared, and as was so typical of our new-found Irish friends, the banter and good-natured ribbing and joking was in full swing. We pulled off along the side of the road that I had seen so many times from home on Google Earth, next to what the old map showed as the National School. [Might that be where my great³-grandfather, Alexander John Ewing, was



Jennifer (left) and Claudia (right) at White House

educated as a civil engineer and, as an professional civil engineer, have his passage to America paid for by the prominent Massachusetts businessman/philanthropist, Samuel Williston?] Dessie pointed to an old path leading into the woods and up a hill towards the mountain. He said: "Up there, but you best wait until the rain is over as the little river that you there need to cross is a stream that is a bit swollen, and the going might be tough." As anxious as I was to proceed, I agreed to wait.

We pulled into an adjacent drive abutting this woodland and stopped at a relatively large house. This was White House, where the land owner might have lived when my Ewings were tenant farmers. The woman who owns the house nowadays lives out of town and visits on occasion. Her son has planted a

small forest of conifers adjacent to the old Ewing lands up on the hill that rises up steeply behind the house.



John Cunningham Pointing Out Unmarked Graves at the Carn Presbyterian Church

Then we drove back to the bookshop where we had started, said goodbye to Dessie, and made a date to see Jennifer that afternoon. She wanted to visit the old Presbyterian Church in Carn where my ancestors worshipped.

We rendezvoused with Jennifer a few hours later at the church. We looked around a bit until John Cunningham arrived. He lives near where the Ewings had lived in Whinn Park. It turned out he is the Sexton of the church. I believe his family has held this position for a while; I wasn't quite sure as his accent was a bit thick. John pulled out an old map of the burial ground alongside the church and

showed us that a woman named Jane Ewing had two unmarked grave plots. He had heard of the name, not only because of his role in the church, but also because his parents were buried right next to the Ewings.

The Carn Presbyterian Church is an old church going back hundreds of years. The two Ewing plots there were in the front to the right. I don't think I would have ever found these graves without John Cunningham's help.

I don't know of a Jane Ewing in my immediate family in Inishowen, but there were lots of uncles who lived near Whinn Park, and I haven't tracked down all the women and children by any means. These Ewings were in this area from at least 1744 to 1848/50. Jennifer is trying to find out more about Jane and also about who is buried in those graves. I would love to mark them properly.

John Cunningham was great to talk with. He showed us around his church of which he is justly proud. We reviewed old records that showed Ewings and also Butlers, who are among the families my family married into. My ancestors also married McCorkles and McCandless's, and an uncle William Ewing, who emigrated in 1850 on the *Adam Carr*, married a Mary Ewing, daughter of Samuel from Inch. (I wonder how many Ewings married other Ewings? There is an interesting article on this William and his large family in the historical records of the town of Northampton, Massachusetts.⁴)

As we were leaving, I offered to make a contribution to the church, which John appreciated. I found out later that there were a lot of Americans who visit these places and ask for help with their genealogic research without thinking to offer some money to the institution they have just visited. Ireland is not doing too well economically these days, and it is not only a common courtesy but economically beneficial to thank people who go out of their way to help. Most people, I would hope, know this; however, I was surprised to find it is not uncommon for visitors to just walk away as if the locals had nothing better to do than show them around.

The next day we woke to a bit of the sun, albeit fleeting. It rained at least for part of every day we were in Ireland, but, like the term 'dry heat', it was a 'soft rain', making it a 'wee bit dampish'. I hoped to cross the little river, Glentogher, and explore Whinn Park. Claudia and I started the day with a walk along Buncrana's shoreline, and then we drove to the most northerly tip of Ireland, Malin Head. This is a rugged headland where people watched the boats disappear over the horizon, taking their families to America during the nineteenth century. During the worst of the famine in the mid-1800s, one million people died and one million emigrated.

We highly recommend a visit to a small, restored clachan⁵ of houses called the Doagh Famine Village⁶ in the village of Doaghmore. It provides a thought-provoking journey through much of the history of Ireland with a refreshingly honest look at its trials and tribulations, its place in the world socially and politically, and its strength and beauty. The village was restored and is run by a member of the family who lives there.

⁴ A copy of this article is available at *dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/447781/EwingSteve_Portfolio.docx*.

⁵ Wikipedia: A clachan is a type of small traditional settlement common in Ireland and Scotland until the middle of the 20th century. Originally kirktowns, today they are usually defined as small villages lacking a church, post office, or other formal building.

⁶ www.doaghfaminevillage.com

We continued down the road to a couple of lovely (other local expressions are 'brilliant' and 'grand') strands (beaches). Coming from an Island in Massachusetts, I know beaches, and I must tell you that the beaches of Martha's Vineyard have stiff competition from their Irish counterparts. The Irish ones are incredibly beautiful as well as numerous. However, the water temperature is less than inviting. People do swim in Ireland, and there is a lot of surfing too. It's just that everyone wears a wetsuit, even in the summer!

We had a great lunch and then drove to the town of Culdaff to meet Jennifer the Genealogist. She had two people in tow this day: Agnes O'Donnell, her associate, and Agnes' husband, Seamus O'Donnell, with his camera. A lovely couple, they were extremely friendly and extremely helpful with our research.

We started off by meeting another Presbyterian Church Sexton, George Mills. The focus of this meeting was centered on the Butler family that my Ewings had married into. The church we visited had numerous Butlers buried in the graveyard as well as plaques in the building recognizing the monetary contributions Butlers had made funding things like linens and windows etc. We scanned the old records and found all sorts of Ewing/Butler information that needs to be researched.



Steve and Claudia at Cos' Bella Faulkner House



Culdaff Bay View From the Faulkner house

George was incredibly generous with his time, and when I produced one of the photos from my ancestors' visit in 1912 he said: "I know where that house is." The writing on the back of the photo indicated that the house belonged to my great²-grandaunt's cousin Bella Faulkner, whoever that was.

So off we drove to a wonderful old place with land running right down to the beach at Culdaff Bay. Claudia and I posed in the fashion of the old photographs. We knocked on the door and found a kindly, elderly woman who knew nothing of my ancestors. We had a chat, showed her the hundred-year-old picture of her house, and drove off. We thanked George for his help and contributed to his church.

Next, Seamus led us to an old but extensive farmstead. At one time, this was the residence of the prominent Stephen Butler. I'm not sure of his connection to my family, but there is much I don't know about the three Butler women associated with my Ewings. Their names are: Mary Ann Gill Butler, from Kindroyhead, who married Alexander John Ewing, my great³-grandfather; Flora Butler, from Donegal, who was Alexander John's mother; and Flora Butler who emigrated to America with my great³-granduncle William (the uncle who married Mary Ewing of Inch).

Throughout this excursion, Seamus took loads of pictures of all the gravestones, church records and buildings associated with my family. All of this needs to be interpreted, over time, by Jennifer and me. My intent is to link my Ewing family on Inishowen back to Scotland where, tradition indicates, they came from. This link may or may not be possible to make, but Jennifer and I are having fun trying.

⁷ There were two Flora Butlers. It has been suggested one was the niece of the other.

We then drove in the lingering twilight to Jennifer's family home for a delicious supper with her husband, Michael, and their kids, Conor and Sinead. Seamus and Agnes O'Donnell joined us also.

We woke up the next morning to clear skies and a rainbow over Lough Swilly. After the usual filling breakfast we took off to the Glen of the Causeway, Glentogher. The river had abated a bit so with map of Whinn Park in hand, I anxiously headed up the hill. I found the White House River, which ran down the hill and merged with the Glentogher River, which I had to cross. Following the White House River through thick brush I slowly made my way up the steep incline. The day was hot and the going slow. Claudia stayed down with the car catching up on her reading, leaving the bushwhacking to the ancestry zealot, me. After a good half-hour of this the ground leveled off a bit into a sort of plateau. I looked down at our car parked in the distance, on the side of the road. I looked across the valley to the opposing hill rising up just as steep on the other side. I looked into the trees and spotted some stones forming what looked like a wall. I got excited. The trees also started to look more like overgrown planted shade trees from long ago. I tried to make for the stones but the going was too difficult. Briars taller than me blocked the way.

I continued a bit higher along the riverside and tried to circle around. I came upon slightly more open ground and was finally able to make my way over to the stones. They were the remains of three-or-four stone buildings with walls and gable ends⁸ still standing, and they were exactly where the old ordinance maps indicated. The roofs had collapsed but on one gable end to the north, the chimney and fireplace with its large stone lintel was still intact.

Were these the remains of my Ewing family homestead in Whinn Park? Did three-or-more generations of my family live in these buildings now just stone shells? I studied the stones and admired the construction and the fact that they were still standing unattended after all these years. As I ventured around the gable end with the fireplace, I realized the structure was on the border of a fenced-in property. On the other side of the fence was an open field with a farmhouse in a grove of trees a distance away.

An aside: Since returning from our trip, I have heard the following from Jennifer:

I have located the homestead of the Ewing family by mapping. I am now sure of the location from a trio of maps that I have cross-referred. A friend came through with the additional land records although she had issues with her camera on the day. I can read [her pictures] myself, but I wouldn't be happy to send them to you as evidence. This can be rectified at a later date. Meanwhile, I can confirm that Farm No. 8, as I previously advised, is the Ewing farm per the Cancelled Books (land records) which I previously sent to you. I am going to send the three maps for your perusal once I get a chance to edit them with notations.

I will also head to Glentogher tomorrow to take photos for you. The [brush] has diminished somewhat since you were there and the going should be easier. When I get back, I will give additional information on the last owners of the property.

I have some other possible exciting news from another location. I have found out that the Donegal Archives hold the Glentogher Land Rental Records which may contain some information about the Ewings.

⁸ End (also Stone-Ender): An architectural style which made use of the material that was in abundance in the area such as timber and stone.



Ewing Family Stone-Ender

Subsequently, Jennifer let me know that I had hiked up to the right position on my Ireland visit and sent me a picture of my Ewing family stone-ender.

Back to my description of Claudia and my trip: The field ran clear down to the road and I realized I could have ambled right up the hill that way instead of my ordeal in the pucker brush. Oh well; it made it more rewarding, I suppose. The old map showed these farmsteads were connected with a road that ran along the high ground and then shared a common road that ran down the hill and crossed the river. After taking a few pictures and admiring the view, down I went and then through the field to Claudia waiting by the car eager to hear all about it.

We drove on to the Grianan Aileach, Prince Owen's Sun Palace, the Neolithic ring fort, parked at the bottom of the hill and walked the steep road up to it. The fort had been destroyed during different periods, but the last rebuild put it in good shape. The view to the north spread out with the peninsula of Inishowen in full sight with the Loughs Swilly and Foyle framing the sides, sparkling in the sun that day. The beautiful little hill island of Inch sat just below, holding a lot of Ewing history in its fertile green fields for sure.

We drove a bit further down the coast and came to a churchyard, along the road, that held the grave of William Butler Yeats. Being sort of a poetic type, and having the name Butler in my family, we stopped for a look. How perfect to see Yeats's grave and almost next to him, in the same row, was Thomas Ewing and next to Thomas was another Butler, of course.

To summarize:

Claudia and I travelled down the west coast of Ireland in August last year. We visited new-found friends and saw most-dramatic scenery shrouded in the soft Irish mist. We went to small pubs and savored lots of 'Trad Music'. We watched Galway Hookers⁹ race full of turf in Kinvara. We went back in time at dolmens¹⁰ and passage tombs. Finally, we explored Dublin with the help of canal boats and double-decker buses. Galway, Dingle, Connemara, the Burren and the Blasket Islands were great places to visit.

But Inishowen stands out. Not merely because of my family connection, but because it is truly one of the most spectacular places we have ever been. The landscape, the people, the history – never mind the food – remains in memory and will pull us back for sure.



⁹ Wikipedia: A Galway Hooker is a traditional fishing boat used in Galway Bay off the west coast of Ireland. The hooker was developed for the strong seas there. It is identified by its sharp, clean entry, bluff bow, marked tumble-home and raked transom. Its sail plan consists of a single mast with a main sail and two foresails. Traditionally, the boat is black (being coated in pitch) and the sails are a dark red-brown.



¹⁰ Wikipedia: A dolmen, also known as a portal tomb, portal grave, or 'quoit', is a type of single-chamber megalithic tomb, usually consisting of three or more upright stones supporting a large flat horizontal capstone (table), although there are also more complex variants. Most date from the early Neolithic period (4000 to 3000 BC). Dolmens were usually covered with earth or smaller stones to form a barrow, though in many cases that covering has weathered away, leaving only the stone skeleton of the burial mound intact.

We learned a lot about my Ewing ancestors, but the big take-away was how important it is to do your homework before travelling abroad. Having photos with notes, names to look for and a general sense of who lived where helped make the best use of our valuable time. On-site genealogy research is expensive, but the best bang-for-the-buck. It will connect you with other resources that it would take you a lot of time to find. Everyone picks up on your enthusiasm. It becomes contagious. I will continue to work with Jennifer the Genealogist. I will pursue the loose ends. I will try to find that path back to Scotland. I will try to identify the unmarked graves I found.

So much we saw, so much still to explore. Inishowen is a fantastic part of the world both for its stunning beauty and its welcoming people. I know we will return.

What our trip reinforced most vastly of all is the importance of family. Extended, here and now or long gone, family is what we all are striving to maintain. Ages come and go, but the family remains. Call them clans, tribes, bands, even 'Webs of Kinship', families are what bind us all in mutual respect for each other and satisfies our deepest needs. That is what Claudia and I found so pure and strong in Ireland: the love of family.



Steven Craig Ewing is a sixty-one-year-old, self-employed dock builder who has lived all his life on Martha's Vineyard Island. He is a member of the Ewing Family Association as well as Clan Ewen. With his wife Claudia, and until recently their sons Niko and Arno, he has traveled extensively, with a special focus on megalithic monuments, especially in Europe. In the last few years, because of his recent interest in his family history, he and Claudia made two trips to Scotland, and this year traveled to Ireland. Steve enjoys writing poetry and last year was appointed the town of Edgartown's first Poet Laureate.

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