



## The Ahern Family

**Ahern(e), Ahearn(e), Hearn(e), O'Hearn(e),  
Ó hEachthigheirn, Ó hEachthigherna,  
Ó hEichthigheirn, Ó hEachthighearna, Ó hEachiarn**

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As for surname spelling, most surnames were regularized after about the 1890's when more and more people received education and were literate and therefore were no longer spelling names phonetically. Certainly your 1901 census records shows the family name as Ahern. It does appear as Ahearn in a few previous records, however its a matter of personal bias which surname to use when transcribing records-all of the surname Ahern, Aherne, Ahearne, Ahearn, and Hearne come from the same root name. I used the surname spelling of Ahern and Ahearn in my research because, that's how the name was spelt in official documents in the 19th century. It is not unusual as family names were not formalized until the beginning of the 20th century-it was probably in the 1901 census that Ahern was first used, therefore Ahearn and Ahern are just different spellings of the same surname.

## 1. Ahern/Hearne/Ahearne/Ahearn etc.

This Irish surname was first anglicized O'Hagherin, which is a phonetic approximation of the original Gaelic *O'hEachtighearna*, derived from the Irish words *each*, meaning a horse and *tighearna* meaning a lord. The name meant "lord of the horse". The family were said to be descended from *Echtigern* who was a brother of the High King of Ireland, Brian Boru.

Later the name *O'hEachtighearna* was corrupted to O'Aherne and finally the prefix O was dropped. The O'Ahernes were originally a Dalcassian (from Clare) sept and up to the middle of the fourteenth century they were part of the clann of the Ui Cearnaigh, their territory being in the neighborhood of Sixmilebridge, Co. Clare, not far from the city of Limerick.

In the course of time they migrated southwards and in 1659, when Petty's census was taken, the name was numerous throughout Counties Cork, Kerry and Waterford. At the present time it is almost confined to Counties Cork, Kerry and Limerick; but in the form Hearn and Hearne it is also well established in Co. Waterford. In this connection it should be observed that Hearn is a fairly common indigenous name in England, so that persons so called in Ireland may be immigrants from England and not actually descended from *O'hEachtighearna*.

The Bishop of Kerry from 1336 to 1347 is described in the records as Alan O'Hathern alias O Hachierane. The most noteworthy of the name in modern history were John Aherne (c. 1769-1806), United Irishman and friend of Wolfe Tone, who after the latter's death became an officer in Napoleon's Irish Legion; and John Aheron author of the first book on architecture printed in Ireland (1754). And, of course, the most prominent Ahern at this time is Bertie Ahern Taoiseach of Ireland and leader of the Fianna Fail party

## **2. Sources consulted**

The principal sources used for this genealogical search fall under the following headings.

### 1. Civil records.

All births deaths and marriages in Ireland have been registered with the state since 1864. In the case of births the information required to be registered was the name of the child/children, date of birth, name, surname and dwelling place of the father, and the name, maiden name and dwelling place of the mother. Before this date the registration of births, marriages and deaths was sporadic and dependent on the parish.

In the case of marriages, any person whose marriage was to be celebrated by a Catholic priest was required to have the clergyman fill out a certificate with the following information. The date of the marriage, the names and surnames of the people involved, their ages, rank, profession and/or occupation, name and surname of their parents and the rank and/or occupation of the fathers of each of the parties.

One problem with birth and marriage registration is that a significant number of registrations simply did not happen. This happened, in particular, during the more turbulent periods in Irish history, such as the Great Famine 1845-1848. In some cases a birth will be registered later. For example, some one born in 1850 and not registered could be found to be registered in 1900, if it was the case that they later needed a birth certificate.

### 2. Census Records.

Full government censuses were taken for the whole of the island in 1821 and every ten years after that until 1911. The first four 1821-1851 were largely destroyed in the fire in the Public Record Office in Dublin during the Irish Civil War, 1922. Those for 1861 and 1871 had been earlier destroyed on Government orders. This means that the only comprehensive census returns for the whole island are 1901 and 1911. Although these returns are very late the information they give is still illuminating. The 1901 records gives the name of all persons in the household, relationship to the head of the house, religion, literacy, occupation, age, marital status, county of birth etc.

The most useful information given in the 1901 census is age. This has to be treated with caution as very few of the ages given in the 1901 census matches that in the 1911 census - most people seems to have aged more

than ten years!!! However, a person born in the 1840's could conceivably still be alive for the 1901 census, and is interesting to see if families remained in the same area throughout this period of time.

The census returns are also useful for cross-checking. Where a name, like Ahern, is very common in an area, it is impossible to be sure in the parish records whether a particular family is the relevant one - especially where Christian names were also similar. In such cases a check of the 1901, 1911 census returns for a family can provide useful circumstantial evidence.

Because of the dearth of census information before 1901 we have to consult with 'census substitutes' to try and fill in any gaps. In each county there are some records, which have to be consulted, and which, sometimes, help fill in the gaps in the civil and census records. These include land deeds, wills, gravestone inscriptions (those which have been compiled on database) local journals, local directories, estate records, tithe book, etc.

While these records can sometimes fill the gaps in family records they are only really useful if the relevant family were in a particular trade or profession owned land or were clergymen. Unfortunately the vast majority of Irish families, in particular, Irish Catholic families, were either tenant farmers or landless labourers who would not feature in these records.

### 3. Land Records.

These consist of two very important census substitutes. These are the Tithe Applotment Books (1824-1838) and the Primary Valuation of Ireland (commonly called Griffith's Valuation) of 1848-1864. Everyone in Ireland had to pay tithes or dues to the Established Church (The Church of Ireland), even if they were not members of this Church. In 1823 the government decided to formalise the situation and conducted a valuation of the entire country, parish by parish, to determine how much would be paid by each landowner.

There are exemptions from the Tithe Applotment, so it is not a comprehensive list of the entire country, and the genealogical information contained therein is quite basic, consisting as it does of the townland name, the landowner's name, the amount of land owned and the monies owed in tithes. The value of the Applotment books lies in the fact, that for some parishes where records do not begin until after 1850, they are the only early records.

In order to produce the information necessary for local taxation, the Tenement Act, 1842 provided for a uniform valuation of all property in Ireland. The man appointed as Commissioner of Valuation was Richard Griffith and the results of his survey, *The Primary Valuation of Ireland* (commonly called Griffith's Valuation) were published between 1848 and 1864. The Valuation is arranged by county, barony, poor law union, civil parish and townland and lists every landholder and every householder in Ireland.

All surnames in the Tithe Applotment Books and Griffith's Valuation were indexed in the 1960's. This index is a useful starting point is a family or name search, especially where the name is quite common.

#### 4. Valuation Office

The Valuation Office has two further related sets of records, which help fill in the gaps left by the destruction of the census returns. The first of these are notebooks, called '*field books*,' record information on the household valued. These notebooks are valuable in determining any changes in occupation on the land between the initial survey (Griffith's Valuation) and the published results, for instance, if a family emigrated in the years immediately before publication, since they pre-date the final publication itself by several years.

The second set of useful records are the 'Cancelled Land Books' and the 'Current Land Books', which give details of all changes in the holdings, from the Primary/Griffith's Valuation up to the present day. Any variation in the status of the holding, the names of the occupier or lessor are given in revisions every few years. The Books can be very useful in pinpointing a possible date of death or emigration, or in identifying a living relative.

#### 5. Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints Records.

The Mormons have been compiling the lists of all the extant parish registers in Ireland. A copy of their records is on file in the National Library of Ireland. These consist of all lists of births, deaths, and marriages in all counties, which they have transcribed to their records. Volunteers transcribed these records, not trained researchers, so these records are used only as a comparison point or starting point. If an entry appears in the Mormon lists it needs to be double-checked in the actual parish register. If an entry does not appear, it does not mean that there is no record in the parish records. These records, sometimes, do help in streamlining the number of parish records which need to be looked at.

There are many gaps in the records when doing genealogical research in Ireland. Many of the civil records were destroyed in the fire in the Public Record Office in 1922, during the Civil War. Many of the parish registers have been destroyed through neglect. However, with the existing records one can try to fill in the gaps and make an attempt at establishing what is left in the records of a relevant family. During the research on the Ahern family we used all of the above sources as well as some local sources which we will describe as we go along in the report.

### 3. The Ahern Report.

From your information you said that your ancestors were from Co. Kerry from a place you said was the townland of Glancullare. This was a good place to start. Dromore is a townland in the parish of Kilnaughten (Tarbert), which is in the Barony of Iraghticonnor in North Kerry. We used a combination of civil, parish and land records to get a sense of your families history in Tarbert.

We had a look at the records for the Tithe Apploments of 1820. These were records of lands rented/owned by people and estimate of how much tithe they had to pay to the Established Church based on the land value. Not all tenants appeared on this list only those whose lands were worth over a certain amount so the poorest tenants are not recorded.

#### Tarbert tithe - 1820

Dromore

<b>Name</b>	<b>Townland</b>	<b>acreage</b>	<b>tithe</b>
Daniel Ahern	Pullen	4 acres	3s 6d
James and Michael Ahern	Gurteenavallig	30 acres	15s 6d

I would say that the James and Michael Ahern who held 30 acres of land are the same ancestors as those who held land in Glancullare. This is the same property as shown in your 1901 Census Report. The other parcel leased by Daniel Ahern was probably a relative. The records of the tithe were less careful of getting townland names right and often mixed them up. However, they got acreage and names right and they were more bothered about how much and who they were to collect tithe from. This Michael Ahern is the Michael Ahern who was renting lands from the Sands family, which shows by 1820 that he was old enough to be a legal tenant.

#### Land records of the Ahern's, Glancullare South, Tarbert, Co. Kerry from 1840

*Notes*

A-acre

r-Rood

P-Perch

£ - pound  
s - shilling  
p - pence

**1848-1860**

Lot	Occupier	Lessor	Area	Rental
			A r p	£ s p
11	Michael Ahern	William Sandes	28 2 4	8 10 00
12	John Ahern	"	22 00 14	7 10 00

**1864**

Lot	Occupier	Lessor	Area	Rental
			A r p	£ s p
11	as above			
12	as above			

**1868**

Lot	Occupier	Lessor	Area	Rental
			A r p	£ s p
11	James Ahern	Will. Sandes	as above	
12	Michael Ahern	"	"	

The land records show that in 1865 on lot 11 James Ahern replaced Michael Ahern as the tenant. This indicates that Michael had retired or died in the proceeding five years. The same happed on lot 12 where Michael Ahern replaced John Ahern as tenant also in 1865.

**1875**

Lot	Occupier	Lessor	Area	Rental
			A r p	£ s p
11	James Ahern	Thomas Sands		
12	Thomas Ahern	"		

These records show that Thomas Sands replaced William Sands as the landlord in chief in 1878.

**1883**

Lot	Occupier	Lessor	Area	Rental
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A r p      £ s p

11	Mary Ahern	as above	31	30	15	7	15	00
12a	Patrick Ahern	as above	27	01	30	7	15	00

Mary Ahern took over as tenant from Thomas in 1880, obviously his widow, this showing that Thomas had died in the years preceding 1880. It could sometimes take up to 5 years for a land tenancy change to be registered in the Land Registry Office so we can speculate to within five years of date of death.

Patrick Ahern replaced Michael Ahern on lot 12 at about the same time.

**1889**

<b>Lot</b>	<b>Occupier</b>	<b>Lessor</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Rental</b>
			A r p	£ s p

11	Mary Ahern			
12	Patrick Ahern			

**1905**

<b>Lot</b>	<b>Occupier</b>	<b>Lessor</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Rental</b>
			A r p	£ s p

11	Timothy Ahern	as above		
13	Patrick Ahern			

Timothy Ahern replaced Mary Ahern as tenant on lot 11 in or around 1899.

**1919**

<b>Lot</b>	<b>Occupier</b>	<b>Lessor</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Rental</b>
			A r p	£ s p

11	Tim Ahern	in fee		
12	Michael Ahern	in fee		

Both lots were bought out in fee from the Sands family in 1918. This meant that the Aherns were no longer tenants but owned their own lands. On lot 12 Patrick Ahern was replaced as registered owner in 1917 by Michael Ahern.

**1941**

<b>Lot</b>	<b>Occupier</b>	<b>Lessor</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Rental</b>
			A r p	£ s p

11 Timothy Ahern Junior in fee  
 12 Michael Ahern "

The records record Tim Ahern junior as the registered owner of the lands in Glancullare by 1941.

1970

Lot	Occupier	Lessor	Area A r p	Rental £ s p
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11 Tim Ahern junior  
 12 Peggy Walsh

These records indicate that Peggy Walsh became the registered owner of lot 12 in 1962. These are the end of the cancelled land books. There do show the line of descent on the lands tenanted and then owned by you ancestors on Lot 11 (consisted of near 30 acres) in Glancullare South in Tarbert.

*This line is according to these land records*

Michael Ahern

James Ahern

Timothy Ahern

Timothy Ahern

Timothy Ahern

*Parish records of Kilnaughten, including the townlands in the Parish of Tarbert.*

Unfortunately the earliest parish record, both birth and marriage records, of Kilnaughten only date from 1859. These do not really help to extend the family line further back than the land records have already. These are the records included below of all Ahern entries relating to Tarbert. After 1864 the civil records have all records of births, marriages and deaths.

*Marriage records*

Date	Name	Place	Fathers Names
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1861	Michael Ahern Hanna Collins	Tarbert Tarmons	Michael Ahern John Collins
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***Birth Records***

1873	17 <sup>th</sup> Jan.	Richard	William Ahern Catherine Lynch	Dooncaha
1874	5 <sup>th</sup> Dec.	Hanna	Michael Ahern Helen Lynch	Tarbert
1875	11 <sup>th</sup> Aug.	Anna Maria	Michael Ahern Honora Collins	Tarbert
1876	18 <sup>th</sup> Dec.	Patrick	Michael Ahern Philomena Lynch	Tarbert
1878	23 <sup>rd</sup> Jan.	John	as above	
1880	18 <sup>th</sup> July	Hanna	Patrick Ahern Catherine Collins	Fallaclogher
1880	13 <sup>th</sup> Nov.	Catherine	Michael Ahern Kathleen Lynch.	Tarbert

**Conclusions.**

The parish records of Kilnaughtin do not contain much information as regards your Ahern family but from the land records we can extend the family tree back to the late 1700's. These records indicate that the Ahern's were tenants of the Sandes family for several generations until they finally purchased the land 'in fee' in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Because of the nature of land records we were unable to find as much about the women of the family. It is only when women were widowed that they appear as 'head of family' and are included in the land records.

# Family Tree.

*Michael Ahern*

Born 1770's-1780's

Tenant Glancullane, Tarbert

|

*James Ahern m Mary ?*

Born early 1800's

Tenant Glancullane, Tarbert.

|

*Timothy Ahern m Margaret O'Sullivan*

Born and c. 1830's

Tenant, Glancullane, Tarbert

|

*Timothy Ahern m Margaret O'Donnell*

Born. 1865

Glancullane, Tarbert

|

*Timothy Ahern m Catherine Hannigan,*

Born. 1909

Glancullane, Tarbert

|

*Michael Ahern m Sheila Ferris*

They lived in the family Farm in Tarbert, County Kerry.

## Current Family History

Timothy-Ahern (Kerry) married Margaret O'Sullivan (her father was Timothy O'Sullivan (Tralee)); had a son, Timothy Ahern, Jr. – who stayed on the Family Farm in Tarbert.

Timothy Ahern, Jr. (Kerry) married Margaret O'Donnell (Limerick.) They had 4 sons and one daughter.  
Timothy Ahern had 3 brothers and 1 sister, all who went to Chicago V/ Margaret Ahern, who never married; John, Patrick and Daniel Ahern.

Annie Peterson in Chicago is a daughter of either John, Pat or Dan.  
Timothy and Margaret (in 3 above) had 4 sons and 1 daughter:

Margaret O'Donnell had a sister and two brothers.  
Nora O'Donnell married James Guerin in Tralee and had two sons: Patrick Guerin and John Guerin.  
Patrick Guerin moved to Minnesota, had a son who became a priest.  
John Guerin moved to Minnesota, had a son who became a priest.

Timothy Ahern, Jr. (Kerry) married Margaret O'Donnell (Limerick.) They had 4 sons and one daughter.  
(1) Patrick Ahern (1900-1980) IRA. Married Josie and had no children.

(2) Daniel Ahern, died at age 39.

(3) Timothy Ahern (1909-1999) lived between Tarbert and Ballylongford in County Kerry, and married Catherine Hannigan, who died 1-4-77 in Glencullare, Tarbert, Listowel, Kerry.

They had a daughter, Margaret Ahern and a son, Michael Ahern.

[a] Margaret Ahern married Patrick Conroy and lives in London, England. They have 1 son.  
John Conroy – He lives in London, England .

[b] Michael Ahern married Sheila Ferris and had 7 sons & 1 daughter.  
They live in Tarbert, County Kerry.

1. Thomas, born 1964, oldest lives in New York City.
2. Timothy Ahern – Lives in New York City.
2. Daniel Ahern – Lives in Syracuse, New York.
3. Michael Ahern resides in Trabert, County Kerry.
4. Catherine Ahern resides in Trabert, County Kerry.
5. Patrick Ahern – lives in NYC, NY.

6. Gerald Ahern – lives in NYC, NY.

7. John Ahern – lives in NYC, NY.

(4) Mary Ahern (1902-1977) married James Scanlon, had 3 sons, 3 daughters:

[1] Thomas Scanlon, still in Ireland as of 1984.

[2] Timothy Scanlon, still in Ireland

[3] Daniel Scanlon, still in Ireland

[4] Margaret Scanlon (died) wanted to be a nun.

[5] Maureen Scanlon, now in England

[6] Doreen Scanlon, now in England.

(5) John Patrick Ahern (Co. Kerry) [2/18/04-2/1/77] Was in IRA during the Black and Tan War. Came to the U.S. in 1928 out of Queenstown, and married Doris Theresa McGraw.

He worked at Prestolite in Syracuse, lived at 304 Bradley St., then after retirement lived on 1704 South Geddes St. He died when he was 73. She died 10/4/76. They had 5 sons, 2 daughters.

a. Timothy, who married Catherine Santa Maria - 2 children.

1. Timothy, who married Carolyn Knight - 3 children

a. Devan (Twin)

b. Lindsey (Twin)

c. Tyler

2. John, who married Karen Talarico - 3 children.

a. Ryan

b. Cory

c. Timothy

b. Mary, who married John Lynch (now divorced) - 4 children.

1. Patrick Michael (Paddy Mike) who married Lisa Sloan.

2. Maureen, who married Walter Halleck - 2 children.

a. Thomas Patrick

b. Katherine Rose

3. John (Jack), who married Pamela

4. Christopher, who married Roxanne and who has 1 child

a. Timothy Patrick

c. John, who is an ordained Catholic Priest.

d. Thomas, (now deceased), who married Gail Rittell - 5 children.

1. Kevin, who married Jeanine Lombardi, - 1 child.
    - a. Samantha.
  2. Kathleen, who married Michael Krohl - 4 children.
    - a. Brian
    - b. Thomas
    - c. Joseph
    - d. Patrick James (P.J.)
  3. Sean
  4. Erin, who married Raymond Burton.
  5. Daniel
- e. Doreen, who married John Drury - 6 children.
1. John
  2. Mary Agnes, who has 1 child
    - a. Daniel Finnegan
  3. Colleen, who married Michael Hartnett - 2 children
    - a. Courtney Clare
    - b. Kelsey Elizabeth
  4. Martin
  5. Jennifer
  6. Michael
- f. Patrick, who married Carol Rubacha - 4 children.
1. Patrick Jerome (P.J.)
  2. Heather, who married Paul Silvia - 1 child
    - a. Megan
  3. Bridget
  4. Kerry
- e. Daniel, 8/15/46, lives in Atlanta, Georgia.

## 4. Irish History Timeline

*In order to give you an idea of the history of your Ahern forbears I have included a brief timeline of the important dates in Irish history. As you will see it is a turbulent history with a long and fractious relationship with our nearest neighbours in Britain. For a long time the Original Celtic/Gaelic people were oppressed, politically, legally, economically, and religiously and your Ahern ancestors took the emigrant trail rather than stay here in Ireland, as did so many millions of other Irish people.*

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| c. 7500 BC     | Ireland first inhabited by settlers.  |
| c. 4000 BC     | The first farmers arrive and develop settlements and communities.   |
| c. 3000 BC     | The Neolithic or New Stone Age people- the Builders of the great prehistoric tombs of the Boyne Valley like that at Newgrange arrive in Ireland.  |
| c 400 BC       | The Celts started arriving in Ireland, from central Europe. They soon began to dominate Ireland.  |
| c. 200 BC      | The Celtic culture reached Ireland. The Celtic conquest was complete and the island shared a common language, legal system (Brehon Law) and currency (based on the value of cattle).  |
| c.100 BC       | Arrival of the Gaels - the last Celtic invaders from Europe. The various tribes were bound together by common language, customs, and religion, rather than by any well-defined central government.  |
| 400 AD         | Christianity arrives in Ireland with the arrival of St Patrick in 432 AD.   |
| c. 560-600 AD  | St. Colmcille founds his monastery in Iona and some of the earliest Irish illuminated manuscripts are created.  |
| c. 500 -800 AD | The Golden Age of Irish Metalwork and Manuscript illumination which saw the creation of such priceless treasures as the Tara Brooch (8 <sup>th</sup> century), the Ardagh Chalice (8 <sup>th</sup> century), and the Book of Kells (9 <sup>th</sup> century). |



- 795 -1014 AD The Vikings from Scandinavia first appeared of the Irish coast in 795AD. They plundered the island for many years, carrying off priceless treasures from the rich monastic settlements.
- 841 AD The Vikings begin to establishment permanent settlements in Ireland with the foundation of a port at Dubh-Linn (Dublin). Other coastal sites are soon established at Cork, Waterford, Wexford and Limerick.
- 1014 AD Battle of Clontarf. High King Brian Boru faced an army of Norsemen from Dublin and Leistermen who challenged his leadership, at Clontarf on Good Friday 1014 AD. His army is victorious but a retreating Norseman kills Brian.
- 1169 AD The Norman's arrived in Ireland in 1169 at the invitation of Dermot MacMurrough, deposed king of Leinster. They quickly established themselves as overlords in Ireland.
- 1171 AD Henry II, King of England, arrives in Ireland to establish his overlordship of the conquered lands of Ireland. All the Anglo-Norman and many of the Gaelic chiefs of Ireland recognize his claim to the Lordship of Ireland.
- 1366 AD The Statutes of Kilkenny - these laws tried to present the Anglo-Norman's from becoming '*more Irish than the Irish themselves*'. Among other things the Anglo-Norman's were forbidden from speaking Irish. This is an attempt at medieval apartheid, an attempt to keep the Irish and English separate.
- 1541 AD Henry VIII of England declared 'King of Ireland' by the Irish Parliament
- 1594-1601 AD The wars of the Earls of Ulster, Hugh O'Neill and Hugh O'Donnell and the other Irish chiefs begin to fight against the English and an attempt to regain their lands.

1601 AD	Battle of Kinsale, Co. Cork-Defeat for O'Neill and O'Donnell.
1607 AD	Flight of the Earls - O'Neill and O'Donnell, oppressed by the English victors at home flee to Spain to seek aid from the King of Spain and the Pope.
1649 -1650 AD	Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of England invades Ireland, in an attempt to introduce the new Protestant religion to the Irish.
1695 AD	Start of the Penal laws, when Catholics are excluded from land ownership, most professions, parliament and education.
1798 AD	Rebellion of the United Irishmen, an attempt to drive the English out of Ireland and introduce the beliefs of the French Revolution, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Many of the defeated rebels are transported on prison ships to Van Dieman's Land (Australia).
1801 AD	Act of Union passed by the Irish parliament, uniting the islands of Britain and Ireland under one parliament at Westminster, with the holder of throne of England as regent of Ireland.
1803 AD	Failed Rebellion of Robert Emmett, another attempt to drive out the British.
1829 AD	The Catholic Emancipation Act, which repealed the Penal laws, was passed. Laws were very strict for Catholics and any person, from the petty convict caught stealing a loaf of bread to a murderer, faced a sentence of transportation to Australia.
1845-1849 AD	The Great Famine, poor farmers and tradesmen (the majority of the population) were completely dependent on the potato for sustenance. When the potato blight struck in these years and ruined the crops the people had no other means of sustaining themselves. One million people starved to death during these years and one million emigrated, many to USA and Australia.

- 1867 AD Fenian rising, an attempt, again, to expel the English. Most of the Fenian leaders were captured and transported to Australia.
- 1870 AD Home Rule Confederation founded. This was an attempt to get rid of the English by parliamentary means. Home Rule was the process by which and Irish parliament would rule Ireland under the British Crown.
- 1879 AD Land League founded by Michael Davitt to agitate for the rights of tenant farmers. Most tenant farmers had no security of tenure and could be evicted from the land on the whim of the landlord. These evictions led to mass emigration the USA and Australia.
- 1914-1918 AD First World War
- 1916 AD Easter Rising-The Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army take over several strategic points in Dublin City centre. They demand full independence for Ireland. The Rising lasts a week before the rebel's surrender. Sixteen of the leaders, including, Padraig Pearse are subsequently executed.
- 1919-1921 AD War of Independence, this was the war that finally achieved the aim of getting the British out of Ireland, and led to the establishment of the 26 county Free State and the Northern Ireland (the 6 counties who chose to stay in the British Empire).
- 1921 AD The Anglo-Irish Treaty signed in London.
- 1921-1922 AD Civil War - many people felt that the whole of the country should be a republic and refused to accept the new Free State. This led to a bitter Civil War.
- 1923 AD End of the Civil War, the Irish Free State is established.
- 1937 AD Constitution of Ireland (Bunreacht na hEireann) written and adopted.
- 1949 AD Irish Republic is established.

- 1972 AD Ireland joined the European Economic Community (EEC)
- 1990 AD Mary Robinson is elected the first Woman President of Ireland.
- 1999 AD Northern Ireland has its own parliament at Stormont ending over 30 years of bitter warfare between the IRA, the British government and the various Loyalist/Unionist military organisations.

## 5. Ireland in the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Why would so many of your ancestors emigrate? The answer can be found in a quick look at the history of Ireland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century the vast majority of the people, of Ireland, that is the Irish Catholic people, were tenant farmers or small tradesmen. The population had not meekly accepted this situation.

In the later part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the first movements of a submerged and oppressed people had been felt. The Penal Laws under which Irish Catholic could not sit in Parliament, vote, practice law, go to university, join the army or navy, possess arms, own land or even keep a horse worth more than £5 were deeply resented. Many had tried by different means, rebellion, discussion, and negotiation to overturn these laws. There had been a huge rebellion of the United Irishmen in 1798, inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution, which had been brutally suppressed by the English army.

In the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the great Daniel O'Connell, know as 'The Liberator', lead the Irish in political agitation for the repeal of the Penal Laws or Catholic Emancipation, as it is more popularly known. O'Connell held monster meetings, to which hundreds of thousands of tenant farmers and tradesmen like the Ahern's flocked. This mass agitation lead to the repeal of the repressive laws-Catholic Emancipation-in 1829.

Now O'Connell had another aim, repeal of the Act of Union of 1701, which bound Ireland to the British crown and government. i.e. Ireland was governed from Westminster. O'Connell and his supporters, and these included the majority of Irish people wanted a government in Dublin, under the British crown, that is 'Home Rule'. However, other, more impatient wanted more. There was a significant majority who believed that Ireland needed to free herself from all ties with the British crown and do so by violent means.

The battle for the hearts and minds of the people between political agitation for 'Home Rule' and rebellion for a Republic of Ireland continued for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even while O'Connell seemed to be reaching a political solution in 1848, there was a violent rebellion of those who wanted a rebellion, which was, again, violently put down by the British army.

In the midst of all this political turbulence the tenant farmer struggled to survive. Because tenants could be evicted at will by landlords for non-payment of rent, most of the profit of a farm went to pay the farm and

most families survive by planting large crops of potatoes. However, the potato was an excellent crop for survival, it provide most of the basic nutrients for living and the particular type of potato common in Ireland at the time, *the lumpers*, always produced a huge crop. Even the smallest landholder could see his family through the winter on one crop.

In 1845, however, disaster struck. Potato blight struck the crop and the potato's rotted in the ground. Without the potato the people were in trouble. Most people had enough to carry them through until the harvest of 1846, but the blight struck again. Until 1848 the potato harvest rotted in the ground. For these years most of the tenant farmers and tradesmen of Ireland had nothing to subsist on, and they died in their hundreds of thousands of disease and starvation.

Many landlords set up public works, whereby men and women, could get work building walls or roads, in return for a pittance and some meagre food. Many other landlords simply paid to have their tenants shipped off to the New World, it was cheaper to get rid of them than to feed them. There was the small number of landlords to beggared themselves to feed their tenants and help them through the famine.

None of this was enough and the country was devastated. Because the 'potato blight' lasted five years, the effect on a weakened and starving people was terrible. It is through that more people died of the diseases associated with starvation, cholera, dysentery, typhoid, famine fever, whooping cough, etc. than of hunger. It is estimated that more than a million people died in the 'Great Famine' and that more than one million emigrated in those years.

After the famine the country took many years to recover and hundreds of thousands of people left. Emigration became part of Irish society. The folk memory of the 'Great Hunger' was strongly etched in the minds of all and they knew that the land would not support all the family. It now became traditional that most, if not all, members of the family, except one son, who would inherit the family farm or trade, and any daughters who could find husbands in Ireland, would emigrate.

It was also part of that tradition, that entire families, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, in-laws etc, indeed, entire communities, would emigrate together, again perhaps, sometimes, but not always, leaving one son behind to continue the family name. Emigration was like death, indeed people had parties, which were called '*American Wakes*' before they left. Most knew that they would never see the land or the people they left behind again. And like the Ahern's, most of these emigrants lost touch with the families they left behind in Ireland, indeed many only left their

descendants in the 'New World' their Irish names and no history of where they had come from.

In the mid to late 1880's men and women like the Ahern's probably took the decision that they would have a better life in the USA and they were probably right. The rest of the history of later 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was as turbulent as what went before, including smaller famines, rebellions, revolutions, civil war, economic depression etc.